

A YANKEE POST OFFICE

Its History and Its Postmasters

FREDERICK CALVIN NORTON

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to Mr. Wood E. Stone, the author
wrote a the book, in memory of
his ancestor Wood Stone, who
was appointed by President Washington
in 1775 as the first postmaster of
Griffed Connecticut.

Friedrich Colvin Vinton.

Spofford, Ct.,

May 12, 1936.

A YANKEE POST OFFICE

Its History and Its Postmasters

**The History of a Typical New England Post Office
in Guilford, Connecticut, Covering Nearly
a Century and a Half**

BY

FREDERICK CALVIN NORTON

Author of

The Governors of Connecticut

Reminiscences of Bernard Christian Steiner, Ph.D., Litt.D.

Published by

**The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company
New Haven, Conn.**

1935

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TO THE MEMORY OF
HARVEY WALTER SPENCER,
GUILFORD'S FIRST DEMOCRATIC POSTMASTER
AFTER THE CIVIL WAR
(1886 to 1890),
WHO DIED IN 1894,
DEEPLY BELOVED BY THE PEOPLE OF GUILFORD,
THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED BY HIS BOYHOOD FRIEND,
THE AUTHOR.

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INTRODUCTION

This volume deals mainly with a hitherto almost totally unexplored phase of the history of Guilford, Connecticut, namely, the life of a typical New England Post Office. It is a curious but none the less patent fact that two out of the three thus far published histories of Guilford contain nothing concerning such an important institution as the town's Post Office or its postal history. Dr. Steiner's valued History of Guilford and Madison, published in 1898, devotes only one out of its 520 pages to this subject. The distinguished historian, Ralph Dunning Smith, and his predecessor, Rev. Dr. David Dudley Field, did not mention the subject. Obviously, only Dr. Steiner considered the institution worthy of any notice whatever. He evidently did not classify it as of any vital importance in the history of the town.

In his celebrated History of Guilford and Madison, this distinguished historian names Reuben Elliott as Guilford's first credited postmaster. In reality two men had served for years previous to his appointment, so that he was the third and not the first postmaster of Guilford.

The three most important institutions in any New England community would, in the author's opinion, consist of the Church, the School and the Post Office. The comparative order may be properly debated, yet it is safe to assume that this trio holds first place. Therefore, with almost a century and a half of history behind it, it is with pleasure that the author contributes this study of the Post Office of his native town to his fellow townsmen.

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The idea of compiling this book and of studying the life of a typical New England Post Office was decided upon in the summer of 1933 when the author suddenly realized that as yet nobody had developed any historical investigation into the postal history of the town. The actual gathering of the data took place, however, during the summer and the fall of 1934. The result as it appears in this volume is, as the author fully realizes, only fragmentary at its best. Yet he is constrained to believe that the effort and the present appearance of this work will meet with the general approval of his fellow citizens of Guilford. It is without question so far as the author can ascertain the first published history of the Postal Service of Guilford or of any other New England town covering a period of a century and a half. And it is indubitably as true a picture of the rather hazy postal system of the olden days as it is possible to create at this time.

The section dealing with the sketches of the persons who have served as the town's postmasters brings to light several new names hitherto practically unknown except to the student of local historical research. One of them will, so far as the author can estimate, remain in oblivion during all time. But in the main the list includes important citizens of the town such as the first President Dwight of Yale College classified as being unusually typical of the forefathers.

The author extends his sincere thanks for the valued assistance given him by Judge Calvin M. Leete of the Guilford Probate Court. His generous help extended in securing facts from the Land and the Probate Records of Guilford, was of much importance. Valued co-

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operation of a vital nature was given by Mr. K. P. Aldrich, Chief Inspector of the Post Office Department at Washington, for which the author is glad to extend his appreciation. Unusual courtesy and extensive help was furnished by the men and the women in charge of the Rare Book as well as the Research Department of that incomparable fine institution, The Sterling Library of Yale University. To this marvelous organization the deepest gratitude of the author is registered.

Much credit is given Miss Abell, for a long time the efficient town clerk of Lebanon, the charming town in New London County that furnished Connecticut with five of its well-known governors, and Guilford with one of its postmasters. Without her investigations at the request of the author that particular postmaster, a native of Lebanon, would have remained in more or less complete obscurity for a great many more years.

In conclusion, the author is reluctant to part with the study that afforded him many pleasant hours of research into Guilford's past, as well as his investigations into the Postal History of the Colonies and the later Government of the United States of America. While the result constitutes work of but meager importance as compared with what will probably be developed in the years to come, the author is none the less happy to realize that some competent historian of the future will be inspired to continue and to materially expand the present subject matter of the text.

FREDERICK CALVIN NORTON.

Guilford, Connecticut,
January 1, 1935.

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

Guilford's Earliest Postal System Described, which Includes How the Mails Were Handled 160 Years Ago, and also the Story of Those Sturdy Post Riders of the Eighteenth Century.

Contrary to the belief held by many—a belief given authority by the late Dr. Bernard C. Steiner, historian of Guilford, in his well-known book, the Guilford Post Office is practically, or at least almost, as old as the Government itself. In his History of Guilford (1898) Dr. Steiner wrote on page 265, that the first recorded Postmaster of Guilford was Judge Reuben Elliott, but in this the distinguished historian was in error. There were two other men who occupied the office before Judge Elliott. These terms covered a period of twenty-three years before Judge Elliott held the office. I became interested in this matter soon after my return to Guilford in the early summer of 1933, after an absence of thirty-six years, when I read a sign posted in front of the Dorothy Whitfield Historical Society, Inc., in Boston Street. This sign informs those who read it that an ancient brown milestone standing beside it was probably placed across the street by Postmaster General Benjamin Franklin in 1755. This statement caused me to make an extended study, not only of the postal service of Guilford and its postmasters, but of the nation as well. I soon found that Franklin's actual connection with the lonesome-looking old brown milestone was on the whole purely conjectural. It was at that time that I learned Steiner's assertion concerning Guilford's first Post-

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master was erroneous, and that the office here was created nearly a quarter of a century before the term of Judge Elliott which dated from 1815.

From the archives at Washington I learned that the first postmaster of Guilford was Medad Stone, a well-known citizen, tavern keeper and extensive landowner. His old tavern at the northwest corner of Guilford Green was, up to within the memory of men who are not yet aged, a well-remembered landmark of the town. There is no definite record of the date when he was actually appointed as the first Postmaster of Guilford. The record in the Post Office Department concerning this fact is that the first account of the Guilford Post Office was submitted by Postmaster Medad Stone on July 1, 1793. The date of the time when he first took office must remain more or less conjectural. But it is perfectly within the limits of conservatism to assert that his appointment was probably made late in the year 1792, while Washington was yet filling his first term. His first official communication concerning the finances of the local office would under what evidence we possess, properly confirm the belief held by the author that his entrance into the history of the town as its premier Postmaster was during the final months of 1792. This brings his appointment very close to the birth of the nation in 1789, and it can be said with every semblance of accuracy that the Guilford Post Office is practically as old as the nation itself. On the whole it has been an exceedingly interesting study that furnished me with much enthusiasm in following the very limited recorded history concerning the early postal activities of the Colonies as well as of the nation.

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The earliest recorded fact concerning the postal system that I have found available at the Post Office Department in Washington is that in 1672 a post was arranged to function monthly from Jan. 1, 1673, between New York and Boston. It is highly interesting to observe in this connection (through the kindness of Judge Epaphroditus Peck of Bristol, Conn.) that Mead's History of Greenwich, Conn., carries on pages 316 and 317 local confirmation of the statement recorded above concerning the New York and Boston Post Route of 1672. Mead writes: "Postal communications between New York and Boston were first established on the first day of January 1673. The messenger of post made only monthly trips, leaving New York on the first of the month and Boston in the middle of the month. According to instructions dated January 22, 1673, the messenger was to apply to Governor John Winthrop of New London for the best direction how to form the post road, to establish places in the road where to leave the 'way' letters, to mark some trees that shall direct passengers the best way, and to fix certain houses for your several stages (which probably meant stopping places and not coaches or stages) both to bait and to lodge at." The phrase "to bait" probably meant a place where meals could be obtained. Continuing, Mead writes: "The messenger was to allow persons who desired to travel in his company, and to afford them the best help in his power. He was to provide himself with a spare horse, a horn, and a good portmanteaux."

It is evident that the first method of mail transportation was by stage, but soon afterwards the Post Rider system was probably adopted. The activities of these

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sturdy Post Riders which obtained for more than a century will shortly be described. This is, I think, the first "dim" record, regarding the so-called New York and Boston Post Road which passes through New Haven County. It did not receive its name as such until a century or so later. From that date until late in the Eighteenth Century the history of the Colonial Postal Service was of a decidedly crude type and few facts about it are available except through tradition and tales told from one generation to another. In December, 1772, the Right Honourable Francis Baron Le Despencer, and the Right Honourable Henry Fredrick Thynee of England, who were then His Majesty's Postmaster Generals, appointed Hugh Finlay, also of England, to be Surveyor of the Post Roads and Postal Service on the Continent of North America. In April, 1773, Finlay arrived in New York, and it is commonly supposed he was given this newly created job in order that he might carry on a systematic inspection and survey of what was then the postal service of the North American Continent. Finlay was an interesting character, and he left a still more interesting Journal published in 1867 describing his activities. From this journal we secure what we now know of the actual history of the condition of the postal service on the eve of the American Revolution. Finlay first explored the system, or what there was of it, in what is now Canada. He encountered many serious difficulties there and occupied much time in penetrating the outposts of that wild country. He finally landed in what is now the territory of Maine and made a trip on horseback to Boston. On the way he inspected and wrote much of what he saw in relation to the semblance of the post

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system then available. The portion of his journey that attracts us the most was in connection with his travels from Boston to New York. This English postal inspector, for that was actually what he was, rode on horseback from town to town, and he left for us some highly interesting observations concerning what he experienced and what he saw. He wrote these notes in his tavern after a long day's ride on his horse. The section that interests us very much is the extreme lack of post offices along such a great stretch of country as obtains from Boston to New York. In Boston there was of course an office in charge of a Mr. Hubbard about whom the Surveyor received sundry complaints. Most of these had to do with the lateness of the mails over which he had little jurisdiction. The next office was in Providence, forty-five miles distant, and this was in charge of John Carter, a printer, who draws an excellent report from Finlay. In Newport there was also an office conducted by Thomas Vernon whose books Finlay found "to be in good order." An office in Bristol in charge of a Mr. Usher, and also one in Westerly, demanded little attention. The trip to New London from that point leads this intrepid inspector to write, "Continued my route to New London where I expected to arrive in the evening, but I found the road past all conception bad so that from daybreak until sunset I made but 33 miles and put up at a little tavern 4 mile east of New London. The road is one continued bed of rocks and very hilly. It is impossible for a post to ride above 4 mile an hour in such road, and to do that he must have a good horse, one used to such a rocky road." So far as I am able to ascertain from Finlay's notes there was

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no post office between New London and New Haven. Beyond that town there was one at Norwalk, but there were no others between that point and New York. Finlay never lets an opportunity pass to severely criticise three well-known Post Riders, Mumford, Herd and Peat, who apparently rode between Boston and New York. He records the fact that each of these thrifty riders pretended that they were put to great expense for horses which he declares was only a pretence. "An ass," he writes in his journal, "cou'd travel faster, they seldom or never change horses. They have excuses always ready framed when they come in late—they were detained at ferrys—it is their own business alone that detains them. They have sometimes said it was too hot to ride and at other times that it rained too hard and they did not chuse to get wet."

Finlay, in his interesting description of this system of carrying the mail, fails to write where mail was left in towns where there were no post offices. It is presumed that letters were delivered to their owners as the Post Riders rode by their homes, but it is also fairly certain there were unofficial places in various towns where the riders deposited letters for the owners to call for. He described one such case. This was at Tower Hill in Rhode Island where the owner of such a "rendezvous," a Mr. Sands, master of the house, was ill in bed and could not be interviewed by His Majesty's envoy. Finlay reports his house was the place where all letters in the vicinity were deposited for the Post Riders. What his compensation was is not stated.

The postmaster in New London was John S. Miller, and he actually had his office in the center of the town.

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He was a young man, Finlay writes, and is given credit with having much knowledge of the postal business, which was not the case in most of the offices the "surveyor" visited. The gross income of the New London Post Office in 1773 was a little over fifty-five pounds a year. What the postmaster received as a salary is not stated. Finlay tarried quite a period in New London, and then he journeyed to Saybrook where there was no post office but was a sort of resting place for Post Riders. After crossing the Connecticut River he waited some time for the Post Rider to arrive from Newport, but as the latter did not appear, Finlay continued his way alone towards New Haven. On the 12th of November, 1773, Finlay journeyed west along the shore of Long Island Sound. He passed that day through the territory now known as Westbrook, Clinton, and the other shore towns. This is what he recorded for that November day 160 years ago: "The Post not come up, proceeded alone towards New Haven, passing through well settled townships. Killingsworth is a pleasant village a mile long; East and West Guilford [now Madison and Guilford] are large villages, as is Bamford [he meant, of course, Branford], likewise; there must certainly pass many letters to and from these towns, but the riders I believe make them a perquisite, as there's no offices in these places to check them. The road is very good. The ferry at New Haven, or rather two miles from it, is about 100 yards wide and is pretty well attended; from the ferry to the town the road was good. Many people asked me if I had met the post driving some oxen; it seems he had agreed to bring some along with him." This last sentence is brief but very suggestive of criticism.

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The postmaster at New Haven was Christopher Kilby who had an office in the center of the town. Kilby complained bitterly to Finlay because of persistently tardy riders who only covered something like thirty-five miles a day, and were sometimes many hours late. They gathered in all sorts of "junk" to carry along the road, and this naturally interfered seriously with the mails. The New Haven Postmaster received twelve pounds sterling a year. From New Haven Finlay pushed on to New York, and his first stop was at Fairfield where the high sheriff of the County told the British inspector that the town very much desired a post office. At Norwalk he found Mr. Belding, the postmaster, receiving a very small sum for his work. This was the last town visited for inspection in Connecticut, and Finlay next devoted his attention to the situation in New York. This reference to Finlay's tour is discussed here because it shows what form of a postal system the Colonies had just prior to the Revolution. It was very inefficient, and without much order or results. The mail was carried by veteran Post Riders who practically spent their lives in the service. Their regular income was so small that they indulged in all sorts of traffic along the road. Finlay describes one carrier whom he called "Old Herd," who in 1773 was seventy-two years old, had two sons, and had been in the service for forty-six years. "Old Herd" was described as extremely hale and hearty. His activities knew no limitations. This rugged Post Rider passed through Guilford, back and forth, on horseback, for a great many years. He carried not only the mails but anything that could possibly be attached to his horse. Goods of all sorts and conditions were dis-

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tributed by the riders along their routes. Great bags hung beside these postal carriers, and what they contained astonished even the astute but patient Finlay. These Post Riders, be it remembered, were largely maintained by this side business which obtained generally in all sections, and for this they received fees which augmented their incomes. They were distinctly public mail riders yet they consistently loaded their poor horses with a sad assortment of merchandise so that the beasts became burdened beyond their capacity. Riders were entrusted with cash to carry to different places; they frequently carried or transported monies backward and forward; they took care of returned horses; in short, they refused no business that offered them any fee no matter how small.

Finlay's description of the sort of "Business" these Post Riders engaged in on their routes is amusing. Citizens, however, were loth to complain of their laxity because if they did this the riders would have nothing more to do with them. Drivers frequently curled up beside the road, especially on a hot summer's day, and both man and beast enjoyed a nap. One rider in the late eighteenth century stopped over at Saybrook and slept for three hours. This was probably "Old Herd." When he reached New Haven three hours late he explained his horse had lost a shoe and he was compelled to wait for a blacksmith to put a new one on the animal's hoof. The Portmanteaus in which the mail was supposedly carried were indeed sights to behold. The New Haven postmaster, Mr. Kilby, told Finlay these mail containers were rarely locked. As a consequence the riders stuffed them with bundles of shoes, stockings,

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canisters, money or anything they could get to carry. This practice tore the sides of the Portmanteaus which, observes the New Haven postmaster, "tears the letters to pieces." He suggested that the rider be compelled to lock the bags and not engage in general business as a side line.

One rider was chastised by the New Haven Postmaster because he carried a letter between regular offices and accepted a higher fee for his own profit. The rider stubbornly refused to pay the New Haven office the regular fee for he said all the riders considered that all mail picked up between offices was handled only on a "perquisite" basis. This wholesale pocketing of fees that ought to go to the department and the "shameful tardiness of the riders" as well as "the barefaced custom of making pack beasts of the horses which carry His Majesty's mails," caused the New Haven postmaster to beg the English surveyor to see that reforms be instituted. But no reforms were chronicled; and the American Revolution for at least eight years rendered the service still worse—if there was anything like service obtaining at that period.

Finlay asserted that the principal Post Riders between Boston and New York were three men. The first he mentions was a man previously referred to as "Old Herd," who persistently told everybody he made no money out of his work, yet who was said to own an estate; and he covered the distance between Saybrook and Stratford. Peter Mumford rode from Boston to Saybrook, and he lived at Newport. The third mentioned was Peat, who, with "Old Herd," lived at Stratford, and he rode between Stratford and New York.

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There must have been others but Finlay fails to identify them. Of each he gave a dismal account of their respective activities. They appeared to be extremely tough fellows to handle. Their jobs were very hard, many times extremely hazardous, and the remuneration was so meager that they were obliged to resort to all sorts of trickery and artifice to establish any sort of an income. Finlay frequently writes that these riders carried letters secretly between such stretches as, for instance, between New Haven and New London where there were no post offices; for this they received secret fees, and never reported them to the postal officials.

Whenever an irate citizen caused a complaint to trickle in to a Postmaster at either end of a route, the informers were only willing to give the facts except through an exacting pledge given by the Postmaster never to reveal the source of his knowledge. Finlay asserts that Post Riders drove herds of cattle along the road for which they naturally received pay, but those who were patiently awaiting letters had to endure this proceeding because they had no other way to obtain their mail. All in all this crude system, graft ridden beyond conception, was about as inefficient as it could be, but it must be borne in mind that no serious reform could successfully be accomplished because of the imminence of the American Revolution and the rapidly developing Colonial bitterness towards Great Britain and all local representatives of the Crown. Extreme laxity of law observance was rampant throughout the Colonies and the uncompromising but pardonable Yankee hatred of His Majesty, King George the Third, operated to cause the postal service to suffer much more

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than other public agencies. The kind of service offered by these Post Riders, reproductions of which were probably in operation over the entire postal routes of the Colonies, was unconscionably crude, given but passing attention by the operatives, and quite outside the pale of regulatory control. But with all of its faults this system obtained for much more than a century, so far as I can learn, and no section enjoyed any better service than that briefly described in this chapter. The whole business was, however, a sad commentary on the ability of Great Britain to furnish a better system to her Colonies. There is no good reason to assume that the Postal Service on the British Isles was one whit better at the same period than that which obtained in the American Colonies. There was but little in it to suggest in the remotest way the tremendous metamorphosis which was awaiting them in the almost immediate future. The pictures we have seen of what the service was in England at the same period, painted with such deftness as Charles Dickens possessed, does not furnish us much reason to conclude other than that America was as well provided for in that respect as the immediate territory of the sluggish British King.

Long after the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, in 1810, the records at Washington reveal to us that what was then considered a great improvement was inaugurated when it was ordered that a special mail service be extended to Guilford on a route from New Haven to Plainfield, which was described as follows: "From Newhaven, by Branford, Guilford, Killingworth, Saybrook, Lyme, New London, Chelsea and Jeqitt's City [meaning Jewett City]." The mode of transportation

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or its schedule on this early route is not made evident, nor is it possible except by pure guesswork to describe or to classify it at all. But we do know that such a service was installed and that eighteen years later, in 1828, a postal service from New Haven to Guilford was scheduled for three times a week in a one-horse "waggon." The development was, as we clearly see, painfully slow until after the steam engine solved the problem.

It is interesting to note that Hugh Finlay, whose inspection activities occupied so prominent a place in the history of the late American Postal System previously described, succeeded Benjamin Franklin as one of the two Deputy Postmaster Generals of America. Franklin had long been undesirable to the British Postmaster Generals in Great Britain. His colleague during his incumbency was John Foxcroft who continued serving long after Franklin's dismissal, for a dismissal it was, in 1774.

It is also a curious fact that all through Finlay's Journal no mention whatever is ever made of Benjamin Franklin, but he persistently refers to Foxcroft as his superior to whom he was responsible.

It is much more than a conjecture to assert that Hugh Finlay was sent to the Colonies by the British Postal Ministry in order to "groom" him for appointment after Franklin had been removed. It has never been clear why Franklin incurred the displeasure of the British officials. But this existed for a long period, and Franklin was well aware of the situation. Finlay served to as late as 1782 when he, with Foxcroft, retired from the service as peace was near at hand.

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The Congress of the Confederation took over the essential direction of affairs of the Post Office in 1775 and a department was at once organized. Benjamin Franklin was immediately named as Postmaster General and his salary was set at \$1,000 a year.

CHAPTER II

The Great New York and Boston Post Road and Benjamin Franklin's Connection with it. Time Honored Traditions Discussed and the So-called "Franklin Mile Stones" Episode Clarified.

What Hugh Finlay, this eighteenth century postal inspector, if such he may be called, did about all of this irregularity as outlined in the preceding chapter, has never been disclosed. The rumblings of the American Revolution were even then being heard, and people had very much more to think about than to snoop around "bootlegging" Post Carriers. But it is eminently certain that things were in a decidedly haphazard, graft ridden, condition before the formation of the American Union of the Colonies.

The so-called postal system of Colonial days was probably the worst of them, or at least the worst that was obviously apparent to the casual citizen.

The American postal system may be said to have actually originated when in 1753 the joint Postmaster Generals of Great Britain, from 1745 to 1758, Thomas, Earl of Leicester, and Sir Edward Fawkener, appointed Benjamin Franklin Deputy Postmaster General of the American Colonies. He has ever since been falsely termed the first "Postmaster General," which office he never held until he was appointed as such by the Continental Congress on July 26, 1775. He served until November 7, 1776, and he had nothing to do with the Post Office Department, so far as I can ascertain, during the remainder of his life, a great part of which was passed in France. Immediately on the creation of the

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first cabinet by President Washington in 1789, Samuel Osgood of Boston was appointed as the first Postmaster General of the United States of America. The actual history of the Guilford Post Office starts from near that date, and not from 1815. At about this period what we now know as the "Great Boston Post Road" enters the picture and it has always remained there. There has been an enormous amount written about this Post Road, but much of it is sheer fiction. From my boyhood I was taught that Benjamin Franklin, in addition to his many other diversified duties, actually and in person, planted the great number of brown stones beside the highway. They are still remembered by old people, though they are rapidly becoming scarce, who lived along this route. Franklin may have done all that is so liberally credited to him in this work, but it is extremely doubtful if he ever did much about it other than to start the work by issuing orders to that effect. There are no records available in Washington or elsewhere to show that Franklin even sponsored the setting of the milestones along the well-known route, especially from New Haven to New London. Some years ago Mr. Herbert B. Nichols of White Plains, New York, made a careful investigation in connection with this "Franklin mile stone" episode in our postal history. White Plains is twenty-three miles from New York and in the midst of that then thriving town in the year 1771 an imposing brown stone (of an exalted Franklin type) was erected. The inscription reads as follows: "23 Miles to N York 1771." This milestone, which is now properly preserved and the object of much curiosity, remained in practically its original position, according to Mr. Nichols, until

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about the year 1884 when the land on which it stood was sold. Prior to the sale this interesting stone had been given by the owner of the land to a Mr. Joseph Lambden who had it carted to his residence some distance away. The old relic of the long ago was placed in a shed, soon carelessly covered over with ashes, and its glory vanished in a remarkably quick and thorough manner. However, after remaining in its ashy grave from 1884 to 1914, the shed was taken down and the old "Franklin Stone" as it was then called, was "rediscovered," and replanted adjoining a hedge on the property where it had been "parked" for so long a time. In the Spring of 1930 the then owner of the famous stone had it replaced on the ancient highway where it had stood as a sentinel for many years, with the exception that this time it was on the opposite side of the road. The writer of this interesting and vivid history of at least one of "Franklin's Stones," if it ever was, gives the opinion in a paper which he read before the Westchester County Historical Society, that this is the only remaining stone of its kind in that famous old county of New York. He further writes that several other milestones were still standing along the so-called Boston Post Road, but that these stones were erected by the Westchester Turnpike Company, which straightened and improved the highway shortly after the year 1800. The receipt, says Mr. Nichols, for the freight on eight of this second series of milestones is dated June 22, 1802. The only reason why these milestones were ever erected was not for the purpose of keeping the travelers informed as to the distance between important towns or villages through which they were passing, but for the

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means of computing fares and estimating the postage to be charged on the letters carried. This shows that Turnpike Companies, besides these within the borders of New York State, might have found it convenient to erect them elsewhere, in order that correct postage might be estimated and fares charged for. Both fares and postage were, it seems, in those far-away days calculated on the distance traveled. It is pertinent to note that about this period there appeared a highly interesting book written by Christopher Colles, entitled "A Survey of the Roads of the United States," and it was published in 1789.

Christopher Colles, the author of this road guide of the late Eighteenth Century, was a curious sort of a fellow. Born in Ireland about 1738, he drifted to America early in life, and died in New York about 1821. He was educated by the famous Pococke, Oriental traveler, who died in 1765. Colles lectured in Philadelphia on "pneumatics"; he also gave lectures in New York on "inland waterways," and in April of 1774 proposed to build a reservoir for the city of New York. The Revolutionary War prevented this work, but he later substituted for the reservoir idea a system of pipes leading outside the city. Colles seems to have done all sorts of work, delved into many problems, and one of them was the survey for, and the publication of, this quaint old road map book referred to in this history. Although he participated in many ventures that turned out disastrously he always held a high reputation, was said to have built the first steam engine, and was a friend of both Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. His claim to fame, however, rests on the fact that he is said to have been the first projector of the Erie Canal.

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This book is a highly entertaining exhibit of those crude days. Reference is made to this book of Colles because it gives clearly the position and the numbers of the milestones located along the main roads described. The book is really a collection of well-made maps prepared by Colles and arranged much like a modern loose leaf encyclopedia. It was the writer's privilege to recently study a copy of this curious publication in the Rare Book Department of the Yale University Library. The introduction, written by Colles, to the contents says that "A traveler will here find so plain and circumstantial a description of the road that whilst he has the draft with him it will be impossible for him to miss his way; he will have the satisfaction of knowing the names of many of the persons who reside on the road; if his horse should want a shoe, or his carriage be broke, he will by the bare inspection of the draft be able to determine whether he must go backward or forward to a blacksmith's shop. Persons who have houses or plantations on the road may in case they want to lease let or sell the same advertise in the public newspaper that the place is marked in such a page of 'Colles Survey of The Roads etc.' " Mr. Colles was certainly an enterprising man but he never extended his book of highway maps to Guilford. He had too many other jobs and projects on hand. The roads illustrated and appearing in the book are from New York to Stratford, Stamford, Norwalk, Fairfield; from New York to Poughkeepsie, Albany, Newburgh, Elizabeth, N. J., Allentown, Pa., Philadelphia, Pa., and Annapolis and Baltimore, Maryland. There is a so-called "Key" in the front of the book designating such "interesting" sights along the road as, for instance, Episcopal

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Churches, Presbyterian Churches, Town Houses, Mills for grist, Taverns, Blacksmith Shops, Bridges, Roads," cutting "the rivers, and gaols." It constituted a bizarre collection of "sights" for travelers to watch for as they rolled along over the dusty road. Carefully indicated on each of the many maps appearing in the book are the milestones which were supposedly placed there by the Colonial, or the later National government, or by private interests; but there is no source of information obtainable to definitely prove which agency was responsible for them. If Westchester County stones, or at least some of them, were erected by private Turnpike Companies, there is naturally grave doubt encountered in connecting them with the activities of the great Benjamin Franklin.

Another invaluable guide in the section of White Plains, which was a unit in the so-called Great New York and Boston Post Road, were the maps published after the Revolutionary War and which were prepared by Robert Erskine, geographer connected with General George Washington's staff. These rare maps show quite clearly and definitely the position and the number of the "Franklin Stones" of the section in and around Westchester County. By these maps of General Erskine's it has been made possible for the historians of that section of the Boston Post Road to accurately check the number of government stones placed in that area and also to determine with almost unimpeachable authority the later ones which were, as Mr. Nichols so asserts, paid for and erected by the Westchester Turnpike Company. It is a pity that some such tangible evidence is not available in this section of New England, or especially along the important stretch between New Haven and Boston.

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Erskine had a colorful background. Born in Scotland, 7th September 1735, son of the Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline, he came to America after he had been elected a member of the Royal Society of London. In the Colonies he was soon "taken up" by distinguished sponsors, and he later became geographer and surveyor-general for the Continental Army. He died in Ringwood, N. J., in 1780. General Washington was his great friend and admirer, it is recorded.

The Guilford stone which has long been a familiar object on Boston Street was possibly erected either by a stage company or by the Colonial government prior to 1789. Nobody knows the answer with any degree of accuracy. There is no evidence obtainable that it was erected even at that period. It might have been placed there after the nineteenth century had begun, as was the case in White Plains. There is certainly no tangible evidence the author has been able to develop after months of investigation and research that the Government, either Colonial or National, ever set the stone. All "guesses" along that line must remain strictly conjectural and subject to revision at any time new proof connected with the stone is revealed. The "personal" history of the stone is that it stood in the northeastern corner of the property of John Hanrahan and Mr. Nouman on the opposite side of Boston Street, diagonally situated about 300 feet west of the famous old Hyland House. It was decided, after some discussion, to present the old stone to the Dorothy Whitfield Society and this was accordingly done. The sign describing its so-called history was erected at that time.

This is all of the actually definite history obtainable regarding the so-called and always famous old Boston

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Post Road. Boys used to hear tales of Benjamin Franklin's riding through Guilford, and of how this many-sided genius actually erected personally the brown stones that were evidently named for him by enthusiastic citizens. Nothing could be more idealistic and more glorious, if it were only true. But I have found nothing whatever to confirm even a fragment of this vivid description handed to us without any semblance of investigation, in the good old days. I once asked the late Professor John Fiske of Harvard, if he had any knowledge of either George Washington or of Benjamin Franklin ever entering the town of Guilford. This query was presented to him one evening in the rooms of the New Haven Colony Historical Society on Grove Street, New Haven, in the winter of 1896. Professor Fiske, than whom no better historian of New England existed at that time or after, promptly answered that he knew of no such visitation by either Washington or Franklin. Fiske died at Boston in the early summer of 1901.

Whatever else may be said or written about the postal equipment of the Colonial or of the National Government in their handling of the mails there is no reason to doubt but what it was of the crudest possible character. There is nothing whatever yet available to prove that it was either regular or irregular, or that it was brought to the town in any other manner except by old-time Post Riders or coaches that carried passengers and mail in the most haphazard and undependable manner. The greatest item of the whole mail business of that period which we most admire to-day is the fact that there was any continuity, or safety, or dependability connected

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with the postal service of those distant days. But somehow or other Guilford and other towns jogged along in that rather disorganized atmosphere, with correspondingly negligible results. The only reasonable way to view the postal service during the early years of Guilford and other towns, say from 1700 to 1800, is that what mail there was to be distributed along the line was left wherever it was most convenient by the more or less buccaneering Post Riders or stage drivers. If the American system compared at all with the kind obtaining on the great postal routes of Great Britain or of France at the same period, it was still more a wonder that a letter ever reached its destination at all. It was only after the railroad superseded the stage coach that modern mail was properly handled.

CHAPTER III

The Postal History Since the Year 1800 and the Great Improvements During the Past 100 Years. Introduction of the Rural Free Delivery and the Parcel Post Systems.

A review of the manner in which the mail was handled since the early days of the nineteenth century might very properly be considered at this time. The system obtaining when Medad Stone was Postmaster and for many years after that period could with safety be easily compared with the difference in the mode of transportation during that era of our country's existence and the system operating to-day. From the most crude beginnings there was not a great deal of improvement noted until well towards the middle of the last century. The rambling stage coaches carrying the mail were no better than the ones that drifted along the sparse highways of New England during the ante-Revolutionary period. Carrying the mail was decidedly a by-product of the stage coach business. For a long time, altogether too long, the mail was handled in a manner so crude and so disorganized that, as has been suggested in an earlier chapter, it is a matter of wonder that mail ever reached its destination with any degree of certainty. It is known that the entire mail for one section, say, for instance, all of the shore towns between New Haven and Saybrook, would be jammed into one bag. The letters were not distributed until the postmasters themselves had done this work for their respective office. They usually took out what was designated for their office and pushed the rest back into the ever-decreasing "mess"

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of mail. The stage driver waited while this crude system was being followed. This more or less barbaric practice obtained for such a long period that we of to-day are amazed at the absence of any regulations or proper procedure in those not very distant days. As a matter of fact there were no great developments observable in the transportation or the conduct of the postal system until the advent of the steam railroads. This took place during the late 1840's and the early 1850's; and it had a most salutary effect on the general post office business. From that time onward the postal system improved rapidly. The antiquated procedure of the early nineteenth century was hopelessly tossed overboard, and the advance started with an unusual rapidity on all fronts. Guilford commenced to receive its mail by steam train in the early fifties (1852) and this improvement and regularity greatly astonished the citizens who had previously looked on the Post Office system as a sort of "merry-go-round," rarely on time, but something that had to be borne with or endured in an attitude of patience and of thankfulness.

It was not long before there was a daily mail, and people were very properly astonished when they received two mails each day. The first railroad train to reach Guilford was on July 1, 1852, during the term of Albert B. Wildman, and this train probably brought the first mail to the town by that system of transportation. By the time of the Civil War the mail system was in good working order—so much so in fact that people generally considered that the improvements obtainable for all time had then been recorded. But vast changes were even then in store for the not distant

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future, as there was in almost every other walk of life in this country. The steam train was but the vehicle for other important and vastly stimulating changes in the life of New England or elsewhere.

Guilford did not have village delivery until long after it had been in operation in larger places, but it came at last, and this was a vast improvement on the antiquated Post Riders and stage coach and still more antiquated local system of handling the mail.

It seems strange now to contemplate that further improvement of a more general distribution of the mail did not take place until within the recent past when the so-called Rural Free Delivery was inaugurated. Few institutions in the history of American progress can be credited with a more salutary effect on the communities of the United States than the Rural Delivery System of the United States Post Office. It was stated recently by the Post Office Department that no other single instrumentality has done more than the Rural Mail Service towards bringing the city to the country and also relieving the prosaic existence of farm life.

A brief review of that development will, it is hoped, be interesting to the readers of this history. It was Postmaster General John Wanamaker who first officially suggested in 1891 the rural delivery mail idea to Congress. This plan was sturdily fought in the legislative branch of the Government for five years before it was even given a "try-out."

The first bill authorizing this service was introduced in 1892 by James O'Donnell of Michigan. This carried an appropriation of six million dollars, but it failed to pass. Later on the Congress agreed to a sort of experi-

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mental plan which was later carried out, and the Guilford area was one of the first testing grounds for this system as will be shown in the chapter devoted to the service of Robert DeForest Bristol, Guilford's twentieth Postmaster. On October 1, 1896, the first experimental rural delivery service was established simultaneously in several states. One of these was Connecticut. Nine months later the system was being successfully operating on eighty-two routes from forty-two Post Offices in twenty-nine states. Thirty-seven years later, on June 30, 1932, the Rural Mail Service had grown to 41,602 routes with a total mileage of 1,358,030 miles and the approximate number of individuals served being 25,594,818. In comparison with the insignificant appropriation of ten thousand dollars made by Congress a little over a quarter of a century ago, in order to test the then more or less fantastic scheme, it now (1934) requires the annual expenditure of \$106,000,000 to operate this invaluable adjunct to the life of the nation.

The first county to be covered by Rural Mail Service was Carroll County in Maryland, where this service was definitely established in 1899. Robert DeForest Bristol was carrying the rural delivery mail on an experimental route in Guilford by July 2, 1898. He kept it up for twenty-two years. By 1915, the Fourth Class Post Offices in the nation had been discontinued as a direct result of the introduction of the new system. It is now estimated by the Post Office Department that an annual saving of \$1,613,040 was accomplished by the discontinuance of the old Fourth Class offices. It is also said that the elimination of "star," or contract, routes saves much over \$3,000,000 to the government each year. These are naturally staggering figures.

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When the Rural Mail Routes were first established the salary in the first instance was only about \$200 a year. Carriers may now get as high as \$2,160 a year depending, of course, on the length of their routes. Motor routes of fifty miles or more pay salaries of \$2,450 to \$2,600 a year.

Illinois leads all the other states both in the number of rural routes and in mileage, there being 2,383 routes covering a distance of 72,392 miles in that state. Ohio is second with 68,864 miles, while Missouri is third with 60,708. Connecticut has 266 routes with a mileage of 6,944.

The general parcel post delivery is of much more recent origin but serves the public in a manner that was never dreamed of in the long ago when the last stage coach came thundering into Guilford around the northwest corner of the Green, headed for Medad Stone's Tavern. A general parcel post system in the United States was provided for by an Act of Congress dated August 24, 1912, and was made effective January 1, 1913. The success of this innovation in parcel delivery under government auspices may be estimated when it is stated that during the first six months of its existence approximately 300,000,000 parcels were handled.

When this system was first inaugurated in Guilford, Postmaster Levi Odell Chittenden was the Postmaster, and the story of its beginning is detailed in the story of his administration in a later chapter.

The Collect on Delivery System, otherwise known as the "Post Office COD," first came into operation on July 1, 1913, although the Act for its creation was passed January 1 of that year.

CHAPTER IV

A Retrospective Survey of the Previous History, Postal Rates of Eighteenth Century, and England's Ineffe- factual Attempt to Coördinate and Improve the Colonial Postal System.

The question of the rates charged within the Colonies, up to and after the American Revolution, is naturally the subject for study. The best available authority for this section of the Postal Service was Mr. Frank H. Norton of Brooklyn, N. Y. Mr. Norton was a well-known librarian in Brooklyn, published his findings in 1867, and from it we are easily made aware of the tremendous amount of study he put into the search for definite data regarding this portion of the mail service.

The most interesting feature of this early postal history was the charges levied for the carrying of the mail. Two centuries or more ago there was a general system obtaining which was followed, it is apparent, for a great many years—even after the British territory became American.

The general rate starting from New York to any place within sixty miles of that city, was single, four pence; double, eight pence; treble, one shilling; ounce, one shilling and four pence. The rate not exceeding 100 miles from New York in the above ratio was six pence, one shilling, one shilling and six pence, and two shillings. The rate from New York, for instance, to New London, Conn., was nine pence, one shilling and six pence, two shillings and three pence, and three shillings. The rate from New York to South Carolina was, commencing at

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one shilling and six pence, and increasing as high as six shillings.

It was arranged that all letters brought into the Colonies of North America by the passengers of vessels from abroad, or others, were to be delivered immediately at the post office in the port of entry, if there was one, for the proper distribution by the deputies. The penalty for overlooking this was five pounds sterling. This ought to have been quite a substantial reminder to one of the duty involved. Forgetting letters in those days, it seems, might have proved an expensive affair.

The previous chapters of this work show conclusively what a ridiculously ineffective affair the North American Postal System—under British rule—was up to the American Revolution. We have, however, not a great deal to brag about even after that period when it became the product of our own American system. There were some curious regulations concerning the operation of the Post Riders, the activities of whom have been dwelt on in the previous chapters. Connecticut, even as early as 1674, passed a law governing the activities of her Post Riders when it was declared that these public servants by their boldness, or profuse and extravagant spending at the ordinaries (taverns, etc.) and other “places” on the road, and also by great delays in their riding, should be properly regulated, so that the public service may be protected and advanced. Operators of ferries were also punished if they did not attend, within half an hour, to the business of the Post Riders.

In order to properly coördinate the British and the North American Post Service, the British Parliament, as early as 1710, passed an Act consolidating the system in

RETROSPECTIVE SURVEY OF THE PREVIOUS HISTORY

England and that on the North American Continent. This consolidation was to go into effect on June 1, 1711, and by it there was to be one general Post Office in London for Great Britain, Ireland, North America, the West Indies, etc. A truly ambitious scheme was then figured out by Her Majesty's Post Office Ministers of that period, but it unfortunately was never put into substantial effect. One Postmaster General appointed by Her Majesty (Queen Anne) was to be the head of all the British Territory, and he was to appoint his deputies to have charge of the postal affairs in other countries subject to the Crown. Her Majesty's Postmaster General under this arrangement was directed to have one general Post Office in New York and other chief offices in each of the North American Colonies. These deputies were given the exclusive power to prepare for or provide the post horses used, as well as furniture for the offices, and penalties were announced for violation of this Act.

But the well-made plans of Queen Anne's ministers went sadly awry from all that I have learned. Ambitious as was the scheme created in London the far-flung dependencies of the Empire did not experience what might very properly be termed a satisfactory administration of Postal Affairs. It does not take an astute student to gather the information that England's handling of the mail business in the American Colonies was anything but successful. It is also within the range of conservatism to assert that it was no better off at the opening of the Revolution than it was when the Consolidation Postal Act was passed in 1711.

CHAPTER V

*A List of Guilford's Postmasters from 1792 to 1934.
Their Terms of Service Compared. Twenty-one
Persons Held the Office. Introduction to Part Two,
and Sketches of Guilford's Postmasters.*

The early postal records so far as there was any available information to report having been examined, the next step in the history of the Guilford Post Office is the history of the individuals who for exactly one hundred and forty-five years filled the position of Postmaster in this town. As was stated at the beginning of this history, the Guilford Post Office was inaugurated practically with the birth of the Government itself. Washington appointed as his first Postmaster General Samuel Osgood of Boston. He was a colorful character of the distinct New England type. Born in Andover, Mass., in 1748, he died in New York City August 12, 1813. He was graduated from Harvard College in 1770 and first studied theology but later took up statecraft and became one of the foremost leaders in New England and the nation. Osgood held many minor offices until the Revolution opened when he led a company of Minute Men at Lexington. From then on he filled important places in the Continental Army, and later was a member of the Continental Congress from 1780 to 1784. Late in 1785 he was appointed First Commissioner of the United States Treasury. This office he held until 1789, when Washington appointed him the first Postmaster General of the United States of America, which office he later resigned. He remained a resident of New York, had as

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his friends some of the greatest men in the nation, was an author of serious books, and his house which stood on Franklin Square in New York, was long a historic mansion in that city. Osgood was buried in the church on the corner of Nassau and Beekman streets, of which he had been an elder.

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Perhaps at this time it would be well to give the first published list of those citizens who have served as Guilford's Postmasters from 1792 to 1934. Here they are as they appear on the records in Washington:

Medad Stone, date unknown (probably late in 1792).

Roger Averill, January 1, 1804.

Medad Stone, April 25, 1806.

Reuben Elliott, March 1, 1815.

Amos Seward, June 15, 1829.

Reuben Elliott, February 26, 1833.

Albert B. Wildman, May 25, 1841.

George Hart, January 29, 1845.

Elisha Hutchinson, July 29, 1845.

Albert B. Wildman, June 8, 1849.

Franklin C. Phelps, May 5, 1853.

John Hale, May 16, 1861.

Samuel H. Seward, June 26, 1865.

Henry E. Norton, October 26, 1865.

Franklin C. Phelps, April 25, 1867.

Charles Griswold, March 4, 1869.

Harvey W. Spencer, March 29, 1886.

George N. Bradley, March 7, 1890.

George E. Meigs, May 22, 1894.

Mary B. Griswold, July 24, 1897.

Mary B. Bullard, January 14, 1898.

Joel T. Wildman, January 16, 1902.

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Levi O. Chittenden, May 6, 1903.

Edward B. Sullivan, January 5, 1916.

Robert DeForest Bristol, July 1, 1924.

George A. Sullivan, November 23, 1931.

These twenty men and one woman have served the town of Guilford as their Postmasters for almost a century and a half. Medad Stone and his friend and contemporary Judge Elliott each served about twenty-two years, thus establishing a sort of joint record. Charles Griswold holds the unique distinction of having officiated longer continuously as Guilford's Postmaster than anyone before or after his term. He served without a break for seventeen years. There were a number of Presidents of the United States and a small host of Postmaster Generals while he was the much respected Postmaster of Guilford.

Levi Odell Chittenden came next with thirteen years of continuous service to his credit, while Franklin C. Phelps followed with ten years. Albert B. Wildman held the office eight years, as did George A. Sullivan a great many years later, while Robert DeForest Bristol had a record of seven years as Postmaster, though he spent a generation of service in all departments of the local Postal Service. I have found no one who gave so much of his life to the work in Guilford.

The shortest term was that of Major Samuel H. Seward in 1865, who was postmaster only two months. George Hart, in 1845, occupied the office only four months, and Roger Averill, early in the last century, was Postmaster for two years. This bare fact is about all that is known about this more or less phantom man. Henry E. Norton had a term of less than two years,



CORRECTION

page 36, line 20

For George A. Sullivan

Read Edward B. Sullivan

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while all of the others served their regular terms of four years.

Vast and almost unbelievable changes have been made in the Post Office system since those misty, far-away days when Medad Stone became the first Postmaster. If that gentleman were alive to-day to check these great changes the result to him would enter the territory, probably, occupied cosily for many years by the late, but lamented, Baron Munchausen.

In the year when this very prominent citizen and Tavern Keeper opened the first "Post Office" there was a local population of 3,460. This number was materially increased during the latter portion of his administration because in 1820, the last census taken before the division of the town set apart what is now Madison, showed that Guilford had reached an all-time high record of 4,131 persons. In the year 1830, however, four years after the separation, Guilford's population consisted of only 2,344 persons living within the present town limits.

This material decline, due to the creation of Madison, naturally lowered the amount of business carried on in this section. It would be interesting now to know what the postmaster received in the way of compensation for his work. But there is no way of finding out. It is extremely doubtful if it reached as much as \$300 a year for a very long period extending into the next century.

It seems appropriate at this point to give a detailed sketch of each Postmaster of Guilford who served, so far as I can learn, since 1792. In many cases it has been a task of considerable proportions to gather this knowledge, and in one case it was impossible to obtain any data of any sort or of any value regarding one of our

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Postmasters. The preparation of the following sketches of those who have represented the Government as Postmaster is the result of months of research, examining old records long since musty and forlorn, and of trips to various sources of information. The result is not entirely satisfactory to the author, but for the present, it will record all that is available concerning the subject. In future years new sources of information and extended research may open more extensive fields and fill apparent gaps in the present history. It has been a deeply interesting search, yet in some cases regret has occupied the place where success should have been recorded. However, that which appears in these sketches represents the best possible results from present known sources. At any rate it is vastly more extensive than has ever been gathered before, and will furnish the present residents of the town of Guilford a more accurate knowledge of their Post Office and their Postmasters since 1792. The most that the present author can expect or hope for is that this work will possibly be, in the years that are to come, of substantial assistance for future writers of the everyday life and history of the men and the women who may live in Guilford half a century, for instance, from now. If this success becomes a reality the efforts contributed to this present-day history of Guilford's postal system and its Postmasters will not have been in vain.

PART TWO

SKETCHES OF GUILFORD'S POSTMASTERS
FROM 1792 TO 1935

CHAPTER VI

Medad Stone

Probably from 1792 to 1804, and from April, 1806, to
March 1, 1815

Presidents during his term: George Washington, Va.; John Adams, Mass.; Thomas Jefferson, Va.; James Madison, Va. United States Postmaster Generals during his term: Samuel Osgood, Boston; Timothy Pickering, Mass.; Joseph Habersham, Ga.; Gideon Granger, Conn.; Return J. Meigs of Ohio.

Medad Stone, the first postmaster of Guilford, was, for a very long term of years, probably what might very properly be termed the leading citizen of Guilford. There would be but little debate about that matter. He was the son of Daniel Stone and Leah Norton, and the family was distinguished and substantial for a great many years. The first Postmaster was born May 12, 1754, and he died full of honor and a good amount of worldly goods, it is assumed, on February 17, 1815.

The late Henry P. Robinson, in his "Guilford Portraits," pays his respects to Stone in describing his monumental tablet at his grave as "The very picture of romance," and later on tells of his activities in verse as follows:

"Here Medad reigned, in this his lordly mansion
And to much enterprise he gave expansion.

Then, on the public square, his station kept
As public post; till here he came and slept
Beneath this monumental tablet that asserts
His early grandeur and his late deserts."

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That he was one of the so-called Minute Men of the Revolution is asserted by good authorities, who give him credit for nine days' service in the early months of the struggle with Great Britain. He probably marched with others to the relief of Boston and thereby gained his title as a Revolutionary soldier. When his father, Daniel Stone, died in 1783, probably possessed of large holdings of real estate in Guilford, the old stage house, so-called, at the northwest corner of Guilford, was given to Medad Stone. This hotel was set aside for the son at a nominal value of £110. This well-known property had been in the family for a long time and was later known as the Miner Bradley Tavern. Its destruction late in the last century has always been a source of the deepest regret to those citizens who long to preserve the old monuments of the past. This was one of the best of them.

In this noble old Public House reigned Medad Stone with apparent never-ending prosperity for many years. It was the tavern of the first order, in the French terms, and to it came the travelers from New York and from Boston. It was the meeting place of the town as well as the section. In its vicinity on Training Days the principal programs of the day were carried out. Those gay, but more or less serious, occasions have been described to the author by old men of the 1890's, and Medad Stone and his tavern always figured prominently in the proceedings in more ways than one. Surging about that tavern on Training Days were the patricians as well as the plebians of that era—the Titled Nobility of Guilford as well as the more humble Bourgeoise. But they were all happy and gay and what part the potent, high proof rum from far-away Barbadoes or Jamaica or St. Kitts played in that drama will never be told.

MEDAD STONE

Medad Stone was a large land owner and any one who reviews the pages of the Guilford Land Records for the period from, say 1785 to 1815, will observe very tangible evidence of his vast and far-flung activities. His estate was inventoried and appraised by Joel Tuttle and Nathaniel Griffing, and amounted to \$16,400. The homestead, known as Medad Stone's Tavern, was appraised at \$3,500. He dealt heavily in real estate and was what was termed in 1800 a rich man. He was also one of the private owners of Faulkner's Island. The town records disclose that on May 19, in 1800, Noah Stone paid Medad Stone the sum of \$158.34 for his interest in the island which was later sold to the United States for \$325.

In 1812, three years before Medad Stone's death, he received a letter in the form of a long poem written by Abraham Bradley, born in 1731, and at one time an assistant Postmaster General of the United States, which is reproduced in Steiner's "History of Guilford." It recalls Bradley's, and probably Medad Stone's, remembrances of the "Crooked Lane," or later, State Street, and it is more distinguished for that than for its possible poetic value. The Washington official refers in his letter to Medad Stone's Stage and Post House and that was probably the name by which it was known for a quarter of a century or more.

Mr. Stone was appointed the first postmaster of Guilford probably late in the year 1792, or soon after Washington's first cabinet was organized.

It is evident that, as there had not been many preparations made for the guide of Postmasters for the newly-formed republic, the "red tape" existing was

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deliberately scarce. However, the only tangible evidence of Stone's first years in office was that on July 1, 1793, he filed his first report of the Guilford business with the Post Office Department in Washington. It would be highly interesting now to see that report, but of course that is impossible. He served the first period from, probably, 1792 to 1804 when Roger Averill was appointed. Averill, as will be shown later, reigned as Postmaster only a short time, less than two years, and then the President, who was no less a personage than Thomas Jefferson, reappointed Medad Stone for another term. This last term was to last until he died in 1815. If he had lived a good many more years it is probable that he would have continued in the office.

From all standpoints Medad Stone was an expansive figure in Guilford's life, and to his record of having served as Postmaster for more than a score of years may easily and quite correctly be added the assured fact that he was far and away the best known keeper of a Public House or Tavern between New Haven and New London.

In this building, with a two-story façade closely resembling and reminding one of Washington's Mount Vernon in Virginia, Guilford's business and Guilford's society mixed for a great many years. It was not only the town's Post Office for practically a quarter of a century, but for a much longer period it was Guilford's "War Headquarters"; and before its doors thundered in and out of Guilford the stage coaches from distant cities and towns. Nothing like it has ever taken its place in the life of the old town. Probably nothing ever will. Medad Stone and his tavern stood in a class all by themselves. They had no competitors then or at

MEDAD STONE

any time thereafter. When Medad Stone died, on a wintry day in 1815, Rev. Aaron Dutton was the beloved pastor of the Congregational Church which stood almost opposite the famous tavern on the upper end of Guilford Green. The venerable church, then over a century old, and the old tavern had been close neighbors for many years. Almost across the street where Nelson Griswold now lives was the residence of Rev. David A. Baldwin, rector of Christ Episcopal Church, then standing on the lower end of the Green. Medad Stone had been a member of this church for some time past, and it is therefore natural to assume that Rev. Mr. Baldwin officiated at his funeral. It was in many respects a big day for Guilford. One of its most important citizens was leaving them forever. Many more were anxious to attend the funeral than could be accommodated in the rather small church where the service was held. Later the body of the town's first Postmaster was placed in a grave on Guilford Green, but it was not long to remain there. Within a few years, probably soon after 1824, his remains were moved to the recently created Riverside Cemetery at the West Side, where the second burial was made, and where, in the years that have passed, he has been resting near the remains of his old friends and neighbors, Nathaniel Griffing and Joel Tuttle. His grave has the distinction of having the only "table monument" in that cemetery. The inscription is so corroded by time and weather that it was impossible to read what was carved there so many years ago. But, by and large, his fame was as great as anyone of his period, because "Mine Host" in any American or any English town of that period of a century and a quarter ago held a place not comparable to any existing to-day.

CHAPTER VII

Roger Averill

January 1, 1804, to April 25, 1806

President: Thomas Jefferson.

Postmaster General: Gideon Granger of Connecticut.

Roger Averill was the second Postmaster of Guilford and he also holds the title, so far as this author is concerned, with being as mystic and unknown a character as ever occupied a public office in Guilford. Where he was born, who he was, when he died, what he did, where he went to church, or any one of the many things any normal man is supposed to do—this man did none—so far as any tangible record is concerned. We know that he was the Postmaster for two years and that his name is on the roll at Washington. But his record is as black an enigma as though he lived a thousand years ago. Every effort has been made to uncover some facts about this man's life, other than his postal service, but to no avail. Washington has none; Guilford has none. The name is more suggestive of Branford than it is of Guilford. The author requested Town Clerk Charles A. Hoadley of Branford to investigate the vital statistic records of his town to ascertain if Averill ever lived there, but no trace of him was found. Church manuals, vital statistics and all available sources were tapped with the same result—zero. A zealous effort was made to bring to light something about this phantom man or Postmaster. In the absence of anything else the author

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feels constrained to publish, in the light of this fact, that he gave us no opportunity to learn more, the only episode regarding his life that we possess. All we know is that he died in Guilford, yet the date is not available. A man who could have been of importance enough to be appointed Postmaster by the great Thomas Jefferson and whose name or anything about his record remaining unavailable a century and a quarter later, seems an exceedingly strange case we will never be able to solve. All we know is that an application was made to the probate court in 1806 for the settlement of his estate. Here is the first of the two records reproduced from the Probate Records of Guilford and which furnish us with the only tangible evidence that he ever existed outside the fact that the Post Office Department at Washington informs us that he was the Postmaster of Guilford.

Probate Records, Guilford, Conn.
Vol. 16, page 316.

Administration of the Estate of Mr. Roger Averill late of Guilford decd was granted to Henry Hill & Anna Averill of said Guilford on their giving Bonds according to Law for a faithfull discharge of the Trust—Bonds were given in Court accordingly and sd Admrs represented to this Court that sd Estate was like to prove Insolvent & insufficient to pay the Debts—whereupon Nath^{el} Griffing Esqr. & Mr. George Cleveland both of sd Guilford were appointed Commissioners with full Powers to Receive & adjust the Claims of the several Creditors to sd Estate & were orderd to give public notice of their appointment according to Law—to appraise & Inventory the Estate of said decd & to make due Returns of their doings in the premises to this Court—Six Months from this 19th day of Inst. April were allowed the sd Creditors in which to Exhibit their Claims on sd Estate to sd Commissioners.

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The second document follows:

Vol. 16, page 367.

Mr. Henry Hill, an Admr. of the Estate of Mr. Roger Averill late of Guilford decd Exhibited the Commissioners Report of the Debts, due from the Estate of sd Averill deceasd which was approved in Court & orderd to be kept on file - - - the amo of Debts to be paid in full by Law is \$157 71/100 Dolr & the whole amo of Debts is \$1699-21/2 Cts. as on file - - - said Admr also represented to this Court that he had not been able to ascertain the whole of the Debts due to the Estate of sd Estate & Collect those Debts & moved to the Court for allowance of three Months further time in which he probably will be able to adjust sd Debts and Exhibit his acct thereof to this Court - - - Whereupon said Admr. is allowed three months time from this Date, in which he is orderd to accomplish sd Business & Exhibit his acct of Debts due to sd Estate.

Whatever else he may have accomplished, the record of which we cannot unearth, he certainly did not make a financial success of his career. The above documents show that he owed \$1699 and had only \$157 with which to pay. That the fact that his estate was never settled is testified to by the total absence of any further records concerning his estate.

Perhaps the future may reveal the answer to this present enigma.

Addendum:

The above sketch was the result of weeks of investigation as stated in the preceding paragraphs. This included trips to each of the principal cemeteries of Guilford and a careful study of each gravestone of the period around 1806 to be seen in either the Riverside or the Alderbrook Cemeteries. The object, of course, was

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to find, if possible, the gravestone of Roger Averill. It was not found. The article about him, as it appears above, was written on Friday, August 10, 1934. In the early afternoon of that day, having finished several thousand words of this story, the author left his home with his Airedales for a walk to Guilford Green. As he stood on the southeast corner of the old square he remembered that in his youth there used to be some of the ancient gravestones taken from the Green in 1826 or thereabouts that had been placed under the eaves of Christ Episcopal Church. He therefore resolved, for want of something else to do, in exercising his dogs, to go to the south side of the venerable church after an absence of forty or more years, and again look over the old gravestones, representing persons who had, for all practical purposes, long since been forgotten.

On his arrival at the place where the stones were lying on the ground the first one that met his eye bore the following inscription :

In Memory of
Mr Roger Averill
Who Died April 5, 1806
In the 31st year of his age.

Here before him was the first tangible evidence, except the brief documents in the Guilford Land Records, that he had discovered about this man. It did not tell much, and the message was conspicuously brief, but he was none the less extremely glad to find it. What was discovered furnished no new clues about Roger Averill. But it did tell that he actually lived, or rather died, that he was buried on the Green, and that his gravestone was removed to the place where it has rested for over a century. The mystery concerning his life is as deep as ever.

CHAPTER VIII

Reuben Elliott

March 1, 1815, to June 15, 1829
February 26, 1833, to May 25, 1841

Presidents: Monroe, J. Q. Adams, Jackson, Van Buren, W. H. Harrison.

Postmaster Generals: Return J. Meigs, Ohio; James McLean, Ohio; William T. Barry, Kentucky; Amos Kendall, Kentucky; J. M. Niles, Connecticut; Francis Granger, New York.

Appointed by President James Monroe in 1815 Reuben Elliott served as the town's Postmaster for twenty-two years and was probably the best known man of his day and generation. He lived on Boston Street in the house now identified by the cellar on the property of Hull's Garage. He was born in Guilford July 11, 1770, the son of Wyllys and Abigail Hull Elliott, and was a member of one of the foremost families of the ancient town. He lived to be seventy-six years old and, during his long and extremely fruitful life, he held various offices of trust and high honor, and was in all ways the ideal village counselor and official. He was a man of dependable character, high ideals, much beloved by his fellowmen; and this resulted naturally in his being given many offices. He married early in life, Grace Fairchild. He first received his appointment as Postmaster in 1815, and at that time he lived, as he always did, in the ancient house recently destroyed. On the east side of the house, during the author's boyhood, there was an annex jutting out into the yard. In this

REUBEN ELLIOTT

small room was the Guilford Post Office for a period of twenty-two years. In it reigned the village Postmaster. It was one of the most important places in the town. Steiner names Judge Elliott as Guilford's first recorded Postmaster. But it has previously been shown that two men occupied the office previous to Elliott's incumbency. The house was occupied, during the author's childhood, by Judge Elliott's daughter, Miss Cornelia Elliott, and he well remembers her death which took place in the early nineties. In that little room on the east side was a sort of counter or table and behind it was a large square board. On this board was a goodly quantity of red tape of the old-fashioned variety, zig-zagged across the board diagonally. Large, brass-headed tacks held this tape in position. When the Postmaster received the bag of mail which came to Guilford not more than three times a week from New Haven, he plunged his hand into the large bag, which sheltered all the mail between New Haven and Saybrook, and he took out the letters and the papers marked for Guilford. Then he tucked each Guilford letter behind the red tape with the address displayed in such a manner that residents entering the room could, if their eyesight was sufficiently good, soon learn whether or not there was mail awaiting them. Postmaster Elliott was not only postmaster but he was the clerk and the assistant postmaster as well. He was, in fact, the "whole works." When a man saw a letter for him behind the red tape it was the usual custom to take it and to walk out. After the Postmaster had selected what mail belonged to Guilford the waiting stage driver stowed the bag away in the coach and headed towards New London. It was all a very simple

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and a very happy way of doing business in those good old days provided no mistakes were made in the receipt of letters. There were few regulations, postage was high, few letters were received, and the Postmaster had plenty of time on his hands to play checkers or to pursue other better-paying occupations or jobs. There is no reason to believe that the system in vogue during the twenty-two years of Reuben Elliott's administration differed greatly from that obtaining during the time of Medad Stone and his successor Roger Averill, whoever he was. It continued long after Mr. Elliott left the job. In fact it was a fairly unimportant affair until within the recent past.

Mr. Elliott having "made good" in the post office job, others of more or less importance were bestowed upon him as they were on other very capable men during the years of Guilford's history. Probably the most important local position in Guilford in those days and for a great many years after was that of Judge of Probate. To this office Mr. Elliott was first chosen on July 20 in 1820, and he held the position the first time for fourteen years—until July, 1834. Then he was for some unknown reason, reinstated late in that year, 1834, to the judgeship of the court; and he held it the last time until 1838. He was a very prominent man in a political way, and in 1831 he was one of the few State Senators which Guilford has had in the State Legislature during its almost 300 years of history.

We may easily conclude that Judge Elliott was a busy man most of his life in his various political occupations. That he was an able administrator is easily attested to by the fact that his terms of office in the principal positions extended over a long course of years. That he

REUBEN ELLIOTT

was also a farmer of more or less consequence is concluded from the fact that, in 1837, nine years before his death, he, in conjunction with Samuel Elliott, a kinsman, sold to Walter Johnson the famous old Saw Pit farm of many acres, which had been in the Elliott family since 1772, when he was two years old—a period of sixty-two years.

A glance at the Guilford Probate Court records to-day will show the observer the meticulous care with which Judge Elliott recorded the testamentary history of the town during his administration of the office. He died October 18, 1846, after a life of great usefulness, leaving a record of high efficiency and ably and sincerely administering the offices he held.

CHAPTER IX

Amos Seward

June 15, 1829, to February 26, 1833

President: Andrew Jackson.

Postmaster General: William T. Barry of Kentucky.

Amos Seward's career in Guilford was of such a character that he was talked about and well remembered for his good work long after he was dead. He was one of a small coterie of men that their fellow townsmen chose to administer public office. He was a member of one of the distinguished old families of Guilford. Born here on November 13, 1786, the son of Timothy Seward and Rebecca Lee, he married early in life Sarah Hubbard, and he lived to a ripe old age, dying on October 16, 1881. He lived, during his life, in the ancient old house immediately north of the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company's store on the west side of Guilford Green. In that home, for almost a century, he saw the life of Guilford march by. Almost across the street from his home was the First Congregational Church and the graves of departed citizens he had known, as well as the town's whipping post, and at certain times of the year a more or less ugly looking pond. Mr. Seward was the great-grandfather of the famous historian and biographer, Dr. Bernard C. Steiner. In the latter's History of Guilford, Dr. Steiner says that Mr. Seward was the last of the more or less large company of Guilford men who, in the late years of the eighteenth century and the

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first portion of the last century engaged in the so-called West Indian trade.

How much he "engaged in it" Dr. Steiner fails to tell us. No mention is made of the particular part he played in that West Indian business. As has been stated before by this author, "engaging" in the so-called "West Indian trade" in the good old days connoted some acquaintance with the business of rum. That was the principal business carried on with the West Indies. There was not much else. There were several first class citizens of the town who engaged in the business of selling rum. This included the famous Nathaniel Griffing, the town's leading man. Somebody had to help import it from those glamorous islands of the Caribbean, and it looks from his great-grandson's statement that Amos Seward was one of them. Dr. Steiner asserts in his history that great dangers were encountered by those engaging in this "business" and that his ancestor was once captured by the British. He lived to tell the story, however, and for many years occupied positions of great trust and conspicuous importance in the community.

During the years he was the Postmaster of Guilford he kept the office in the little addition on the north side of his home. That annex to-day is the home of the Thrift Shop. But in the days of the author's boyhood it was the workshop of two famous old cobblers, Deacon Julius Augustus Dowd and Major Hall,—famous not only as a cobbler but a town drummer. Deacon Dowd was the last surviving member of the famous company of shoemakers that yearly exported from the town shoes that had been made by hand by some of the town's well-known citizens. It was more than a century ago the

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town's leading industry next to farming. In that old room from 1829 to 1833 was the Post Office, and on the walls was the same old red tape system as Reuben Elliott maintained in Boston Street. There was nothing of importance happened during the four years Mr. Seward held the office.

In June, 1697, there was established in Guilford what was known as "The Proprietors of The Common and the Undivided Lands." This was a more or less active organization for a great many years. We see frequent references to it in the town meetings of the eighteenth century, and from all that can be gathered from their history their activities seem to have had very indefinite limits. Meetings of the organization were held irregularly, and as the land in question was disposed of less and less reason existed for their continuance. The last meeting of the "proprietors" was held in 1826 and the last entry in their journal of proceedings was made on June 14, 1831.

Dissolution of the organization with so many years of history behind it was easily foreseen. The termination came on October 1, 1822, when the town appointed Amos Seward to meet the "Proprietors" and "Common Lands" to make arrangements for the closing up of the business which took place later. In February, 1828, Mr. Seward was named on a committee consisting of Nathaniel Griffing, William Todd, Daniel Loper, and George Landon to inquire into the matter of erecting a new meetinghouse to take the place of the venerable structure which had stood across the street from Mr. Seward's home, on Guilford Green, facing the western sky since 1713. This committee, which, by the way, was

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composed of probably five of the ablest men in Guilford at that period, reported the estimated cost to be \$7,500.

Mr. Seward was clerk of the Borough of Guilford, incorporated in 1815, during the years from 1826 to 1832, and he was the master of St. Albans Lodge, A. F. & A. M., from 1820 to 1827. An important event in this man's life took place in 1837 when his daughter, Rachel Stone Seward, married Ralph Dunning Smith who had recently come to town from Southbury and set up practice here as a lawyer. He became, in after years, one of the distinguished lawyers of the state, judge of probate for the district, one of the incorporators and creators of the present New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company, a historian of rare accomplishments, left behind him when he died a mass of historical work of great value, and is still remembered as probably the outstanding figure in Guilford's business and cultural life for a generation. Rachel Smith's grandson was the late gifted, nationally known historian and biographer, Dr. Bernard Christian Steiner, who, in 1898, published the first completed history of Guilford and Madison.

Amos Seward's ashes are in Alderbrook Cemetery, and the late Henry P. Robinson in his "Guilford Portraits," writes of this grand old man and his Post Office activities as follows:

"Found master of the Post, primeval quite,
Himself; a single letter gave delight;
Red ribbons, loosely looped upon the wall,
Held that one letter for a call;
Read out aloud one day to waiting crowd around,
Hoping for them that letter would be found.

* * * * *

Before us all he dwelt in peaceful calm,
And showed to youthful life old age's charm."

CHAPTER X

Albert Boardman Wildman

May 25, 1841, to January 29, 1845

June 8, 1849, to May 5, 1853

Presidents: John Tyler and Zachary Taylor.

Postmaster Generals: Francis Granger, New York; Jacob Collamer of Vermont.

For much more than a generation the name of Albert Boardman Wildman was the common synonym of all that was public spirited, progressive, or courteous, and the personification of a standard of fine citizenship. He was one of the kind of men that have made New England an honored section. Although this man has been dead for fifty-six years he is still spoken of in Guilford, and is remembered as one of the town's most worthy and ideal citizens. The family to whom he gave distinction, as did his son afterwards, came to Guilford many years before from the town of Danbury. For at least three generations they played an important rôle in the life of this town.

Albert Boardman Wildman was born on June 2, 1810, the son of Agur Wildman, a man of sterling, rugged character, and one of the early merchants of the last century. He established a sort of traveling business between this town and Durham, and he used to drive back and forth selling goods along the route. Later he established the business which was carried on for a great many years by his son. Albert Wildman entered business early in his life, and he also married when he was

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twenty-eight years of age, Abigail Graves Benton who survived him for many years, dying in 1900. In early life he became associated with his father in mercantile pursuits and for a great many years conducted a business in a building he owned at the south end of Guilford Green now the property of Ernest White. When he established the store and started the business the ground where Butler's store now stands was an open lot, the property of William Griffing who lived in the house on the corner, now owned by Mrs. George Davis. The store was the leading one in the town, although there were several others, but none of them so important as the Wildman establishment. He not only took a prominent position among the business men of the community but he was also looked upon throughout his life as one of the town's choicest citizens. Whenever a man of sterling character and rare qualities of mind and of body was needed in public life he was invariably, like Amos Seward or Reuben Elliott, of an earlier generation, chosen for the task at hand. Most of his fruitful life was spent in conducting the prosperous business he carried on at the south end of Guilford Green. He always took a leading part in the political life of the town. A prominent member of the old Whig party he naturally became a republican in 1856 and voted for John C. Fremont. When thirty-one years of age he was appointed postmaster of Guilford, probably by John Tyler, as President William Henry Harrison had died only a few weeks before. There were two postmaster generals during his incumbency. He established the office in the store which he conducted, and for eight years his well-known store housed the postal headquarters of

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the town. There is no reason to believe that there was any change made in the general system obtaining in handling the mail than that followed by previous Postmasters. There is, of course, now no way of ascertaining this fact, but it is perfectly safe to assume that the tri-weekly visit of the "one horse waggon" from New Haven operated the same as it did in previous administrations of the Post Office. The store naturally became not only the leading trading center of the community but the focal center of the industrial and the business life of the town. There are no outstanding facts concerning the office of Postmaster under Mr. Wildman that I have been able to secure except that the business was conducted in a highly satisfactory manner. From my grandfather who was thirty-six years old when Mr. Wildman became the Postmaster of Guilford, I used to often hear words of praise spoken about the latter's work and his standing in the town.

Mr. Wildman took a prominent part in the activities attending the Civil War so far as its connection with Guilford was concerned. When Lincoln's call for 75,000 men was made in April, 1860, the first thing that was done was to circulate a petition for a town meeting to meet the emergency in the old New England manner. The petition was probably prepared by Dr. Alvan Talcott, Guilford's well-known physician and genealogical authority, for it is in his handwriting. This petition, non-partisan in character, offers us an excellent opportunity to see the list of the then apparent outstanding citizens of Guilford. In this interesting list appears the names of Albert Boardman Wildman, James M. Hunt, Beverly Monroe, George Kimberley, James Mon-

ALBERT BOARDMAN WILDMAN

roe, Deacon John Graves, Cornelius Wildman and Henry Hale. In this epochal town meeting of 1860 a resolution was adopted which provided for the town to make the necessary appropriation of money to procure arms and to furnish clothing for the volunteers who were in a great many cases to give their lives on Southern battlefields. This committee appointed to carry out the provisions of this work was composed of seven citizens, one of whom was Mr. Wildman. Steiner, in his History of Guilford, writes concerning this period of our town's history that F. A. Drake, a wealthy but devoted patriot who had come here from another town, declared that "that there were other men who were glad to give as well as I," such as "Judge Edward R. Landon, famous in Guilford's history, A. B. Wildman, John Hale, Calvin M. Leete, John R. Stanton, Dr. Alvan Talcott and others."

In the session of the General Assembly held in 1858, when the newly-formed republican party was only two years old, Mr. Wildman represented the town of Guilford. He died at sixty-eight, on May 2, 1878, but his life was filled with wide activity of various types and he is remembered to-day among the older inhabitants as a man of sterling worth and outstanding character. His son, Joel Tuttle Wildman, long one of the foremost, cultured citizens of Guilford, was postmaster much more than half a century after his father relinquished the office. Henry P. Robinson in his "Guilford Portraits," pays this tribute to the memory of Mr. Wildman:

"He stood uprightly tall and manly fair,
And wore on his smooth face the higher air
Of honor and proved probity, unswerving.

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He was a merchant of an older time,
When six pence passed by candle light for dime.

Tuttle he knew and loved, and linked the name
With his; merchants of good report and fame,
Successful through their dealing days and lives.

Then through the war he served, by son and pence
His manner frank and fair and mild and genial,
As fellow man, well would treat a menial.
A father of the town, he walked our ways
And then from life retreated, full of praise.”

CHAPTER XI

George Hart

January 29, 1845, to July 29, 1845

President: James Knox Polk.

Postmaster General: Cave Johnson, Tenn.

George Hart was the second Postmaster serving Guilford, the facts about whose life have been extraordinarily hard to obtain. I have, however, secured more information about this man than I could concerning Roger Averill. But the facts are precious few none the less. His life, also, with a very few exceptions, was shrouded more or less with a blankness that would not be expected to attend a Postmaster in a town like Guilford.

He was a member of a sterling family of the town, who for generations filled an important place in Guilford and its history. Its most conspicuous member, probably, was the late Professor Samuel Hart, long professor of the Romance languages, mathematics and Latin at Trinity College in Hartford, and afterwards dean of the Berkeley Divinity School at Middletown. He was secretary of the House of Bishops of the United States for many years and Custodian for years of the Standard Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church in the United States. This vastly distinguished churchman and historian was a cousin of Postmaster Hart of Guilford.

Another member of the family was the late beloved

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Thomas Hart Landon, clerk of the Supreme Court, district of New York, and who died here in 1883. His son, Thomas Hart Landon, is the only member of the distinguished family bearing the name living here to-day, although the family was once numerous.

George Hart was born in Guilford February 8, 1794, the son of Deacon Thomas Hart, spent his life here, and died in what is now known as the old Hart homestead in Water Street, on May 28, 1848. His father, Deacon Thomas Hart, was a deacon of the First Congregational Church from March 29, 1809, to May 29, 1829. His son's life was passed in this town, yet it has been exceedingly difficult for me to obtain much information about his business or his personal life.

It seems quite strange that there is no more material concerning him now obtainable. His career, together with the one of Roger Averill, caused the author more futile research and investigation than any of the other Postmasters of the 143 years' era. What this man did during his life is more or less shrouded in mystery. Talcott's Genealogy shows he married when he was twenty-two years old Miss Clarissa Parmele of Guilford, on March 27, 1816. Seven children were born to this couple. One of his daughters, the late Miss Ruth Hart who was born in 1819 and died on May 6, 1905, was one of the choicest characters Guilford produced during her era. She was a woman of surpassing charm and intelligence and her distinguished kinsman Professor Samuel Hart once described her to me in almost these exact words. Long after the remainder of the family had died she lived on and held a sort of "court" in the small, typically eighteenth century residence in Water Street.

GEORGE HART

It was the good fortune of this writer during his youth, forty or more years ago, to call on this remarkably attractive woman whose life reached so far back into the nineteenth century. It was a visit never to be forgotten. The charm of that personality lingers after a lapse of almost half a century.

George Hart probably engaged in farming. There were few in Guilford who followed any other avocation. The land records show us that in 1817 he leased for three years of Israel Halleck, father of the distinguished poet, a piece of land in West Lane, wherever that was. It could not have been on Water Street for that has been known as either Bridge or Water Street for more than two centuries. However, Hart's activities in real estate were fairly numerous, for his name appears frequently in various transactions on pages 51, 52, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61 and 62 of Volume 31 of the Guilford Land Records. During the years of 1837 and 1839 he was the warden of the borough of Guilford. No trace of his activities other than those here mentioned have been secured by the writer after a zealous and steadfast search. President Polk appointed him Postmaster of Guilford in 1845, and he held the position exactly six months, from January to July. Where the Post Office was kept during that period it has been impossible to ascertain with certainty. The records at Washington do not indicate it nor is there any way of finding out this fact.

It is probable that he lived most of his life in the home in Water Street. It has been impossible to check this statement as accurate, but it is probable his daughter spent her life there so that furnishes a good basis for the

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assertion. Postmaster Hart died at fifty-four. His life from a financial standpoint does not seem to have been a success. The inventory of his estate occupies several closely-written pages on the Probate Records, but the total amount of his worldly belongings when he died amounted in the net to only \$442.66. His liabilities, some claims of which had to be examined and passed upon by a commission, totaled \$814.64; and it is recorded on June 18th, 1849, that Judge Ralph Dunning Smith, then Judge of Probate for the District, allowed the sum of \$40 for the support of Hart's family during the settlement of the estate. It is announced in the records that the judge "deemed that amount reasonable!" When the estate was finally settled, if it ever was, does not appear as there is no record of such a transaction available. That he was possessed of no real estate when he died appears in the inventory of his estate. But his daughter continued living in the house where he died for almost sixty years after her father's death.

CHAPTER XII

Elisha Hutchinson

July 29, 1845, to June 8, 1849

President: James Knox Polk.

Postmaster General: Cave Johnson, Tenn.

Elisha Hutchinson, M.D., was a prominent physician of Guilford for eleven years, occupied high offices in the town of Guilford, but eighty-five years after he left hardly anything could be secured to prepare a sketch of his life. Steiner's History mentions him in only a casual manner. The writer secured the fact from Washington that he was four years Postmaster of Guilford, yet precious little available information was obtainable concerning his life. After much research it was found in the archives of the Yale Medical School that he entered that school from the town of Lebanon. Various Yale obituary records were examined to no avail. Then, Orlo D. Hine's "Early Lebanon" was consulted and further pertinent facts about him were unearthed. Extensive search was carried on for some time in other places which resulted finally in a trip by the author to that charming old town of Lebanon on a beautiful day late in August. In this ancient town, which, by the way, furnished five governors to this Commonwealth and produced the great Jonathan Trumbull, the history of Elisha Hutchinson was finally "re-created" as it appears here. Altogether the author spent about a month in following different "leads" in order to secure material for this sketch.

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Elisha Hutchinson, for four years Postmaster of Guilford, justice of the peace, warden of the borough, and socially prominent, was born in Lebanon on February 12, 1800, and was the son of Dr. Daniel Hutchinson born November 22, 1767, and of Susanna Throop. His father practiced medicine in Lebanon for many years. The Hutchinson family name appears in the Lebanon records as early as 1702 and has been prominent in that town for a great many years. Dr. Elisha Hutchinson's uncle, Elisha Hutchinson, from whom the Guilford Postmaster was named, was town clerk of Lebanon from 1805 to 1831. Dr. Hutchinson's early life was spent in Lebanon, and he was married there on September 23, 1826, to Marietta Bailey, born there in June, 1803. This marriage took place while the young husband was a student, apparently, in the Yale Medical School which he had entered some time before. A daughter, Marietta, was born to the couple. She died in Brooklyn some years ago. Upon his graduation from the Yale Medical School in 1828, he returned to his home in Lebanon and soon after became a member of the Connecticut Medical Association. He commenced at once the practice of medicine, presumably with his father who was then known far and wide as a successful practitioner in that interesting section of the state. From all that can be gathered, after consulting with Town Clerk Abell of Lebanon and a member of the family there, Dr. Hutchinson's wife must have died in Lebanon some time previous to 1838; and it is considered that this sad event contributed largely to his moving to Guilford. However this may be, it is certain the physician set out in the early part of 1838 and traveled the sixty odd miles

ELISHA HUTCHINSON

to Guilford to make this town his future home. His career in Lebanon was of an exceedingly successful character so far as can be learned and the prestige of his family would naturally have cemented him to that locality for his life's work. But he had some reason, not yet disclosed, to lead him to Guilford.

On his arrival in this town he commenced his practice in a house standing on ground later occupied by the Music Hall, but now known as the store of Morris Wolozin. In this house he lived during his residence in Guilford. He changed his membership in the Connecticut Medical Association at that time, from Lebanon to Guilford, and rapidly created a good professional business. It has been told the author of these sketches by a responsible person and, indeed it was also spoken of as highly probable by a member of the family in Lebanon, that soon after his arrival here Dr. Hutchinson married either a sister or a daughter of the then well-known physician Dr. Anson T. Foote, whose home was next to that occupied by Amos Seward. This ground is now occupied by the present "A. and P. Store," on the west side of the Green. In any event a son was born to him in Guilford, whose name was William Hutchinson, and who lived for a long time after his father's death.

Dr. Hutchinson was a forceful man, a man of large ability and much social standing wherever he lived. The house he lived in during his life in Guilford was situated not far from one occupied a century before by another extremely forceful character, Rev. Thomas Ruggles, Jr., pastor of the First Church, who died in 1770, and who wrote the first registered History of Guilford. Dr. Hutchinson appears to have been a man

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of exceptional and attractive qualities, for he was "taken up" by the townspeople and offices were bestowed on him almost immediately after he arrived. This has never been what might be called a "characteristic quality" of Guilford's system of dealing with "strangers." By the word strangers it might be calculated on general principles that anybody, man or woman, was a stranger at any time within a ten-year period or so of satisfactory residence in this town. It is understood that his medical practice was excellent from the first and that his social status also kept pace with his professional work.

A year or two after Dr. Hutchinson had commenced his practice here an event took place which will occupy a place in this sketch, and also probably give rise to speculation on the part of those who may read this series of stories of Guilford's postmasters. In 1840 a vote was taken by Guilford citizens on the question of the sale of alcoholic liquors in the town for the coming year. The vote resulted 82 to 66 in favor of the sale of liquor, and Steiner records that those citizens who were properly licensed by the authorities to sell liquor were Miner Bradley, proprietor of the old Medad Stone Tavern at the northwest corner of the Green; Dr. Elisha Hutchinson, Dr. Anson T. Foote, another prominent physician, who died in 1841; Frederick R. Griffing, later the town's wealthiest citizen, who also became a great railroad builder; Rossiter Parmelee, about whom I have secured no information, and Bildad Bishop, a West Side merchant whose "grog shop" was probably in the west basement of the present home of Carl Stevens. Just what Dr. Hutchinson's and Dr. Foote's status was in the sale of spirituous liquors in the town of Guilford in the

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happy year of 1841 is, of course, impossible to state, but it is at least an interesting question. All one may be permitted to assume is that these two worthy physicians, whose professional standing was of the best, obtained these licenses in order to be more easily allowed to use liquor in the practice of their profession. However this may be, we have the fact established that the other two physicians who were practicing here at the same time, Dr. Joel Canfield and Dr. Alvan Talcott, did not deem it necessary or expedient to take out retail liquor licenses.

Liquor, especially that form called rum, and which came from the glamorous West Indies, such as St. Kitts, Trinidad, Barbadoes, good old Jamaica, and even the Bahamas, held high place in the history of most New England towns, and was well esteemed generally by both the medical fraternity and the laity.

Dr. Hutchinson was elected warden of the Borough of Guilford in 1843, and he held the position until 1845; he was also a justice of the peace in the year, at least, 1844, for the author has seen a document signed by him as such in that year.

His standing in the town, after a residence of only six years, may be fairly estimated by the fact that in 1845 he was appointed postmaster of the town by President Polk. He conducted the office in a small addition to his home, on the north side, and it is told that the same old red tape system obtained there as it did at Reuben Elliott's, Amos Seward's and Albert B. Wildman's. Stage coaches, or what were alleged to be stage coaches, still brought the "mail" with more or less promptness and regularity from New Haven, and

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Dr. Hutchinson, or whoever handled the same, picked out what was for Guilford, and the remainder was sent east for Saybrook, New London, and way stations. It has been impossible to gather much concerning that period. All that has been learned is that Dr. Hutchinson directed the office with the usual success obtaining at that time and that there were no events during the four years that were sufficiently important to be recorded now.

What prompted the doctor to leave Guilford is wholly conjectural. No clue explaining his action could be found in Lebanon. However, in the year 1849, after about eleven years in Guilford, Dr. Hutchinson left Guilford with his wife and son and daughter for Buffalo, N. Y. This city he made his home for the remainder of his life. It was understood in Lebanon that he continued the practice of medicine in Buffalo and that he also met with a substantial measure of success. All that we know authoritatively was that he lived there until August 20, 1862, when he died aged 62, and was buried there. It is fairly safe to assume that Dr. Hutchinson took a leading rôle in Buffalo as he did elsewhere, for that was one of his characteristics. Soon after his death his wife and son and daughter returned "East" and settled permanently in Brooklyn, N. Y., living on South Oxford Street in that city. Mrs. Scott Bryan, Sr., attended a private school in Brooklyn while they were living there and she visited the Hutchinson family during those years.

The outstanding item concerning Dr. Hutchinson's history is that almost all of the facts about him and his work had to be gathered outside of Guilford.

CHAPTER XIII

Franklin Collins Phelps

May 5, 1853, to May 16, 1861
April 25, 1867, to March 4, 1869

Presidents: Franklin Pierce and Andrew Johnson.

Postmaster Generals: James Campbell, Pennsylvania; Alexander W. Randall, Wisconsin.

The late Henry P. Robinson wrote of Franklin Collins Phelps,

“Scarce figure, in our commune, could there be
In retrospective days, more known than he,
More frank and full pronounced, nor diffident,
Like soldier marched despite impediment.”

This was probably a comprehensive and proper picture of the man who for a long term of years held first rank as a leading man of the community. Dignified, schooled in old-time courtesies, a democrat of the first grade, and loyal to all his friends, he spent his life an honored resident of the town and its vicinity.

In my father's diary for the year 1873, on the date December 29th, is written the single sentence, “Franklin Phelps died today AE 71.” That was all he wrote for the day. It was apparently the most important event in the town where this man had been known and honored in many ways for a good part of two generations.

He was born in 1803, probably somewhere in New York State, the son of James Phelps, and spent his life

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here. He lived in the old house on State Street at the junction of Union Street and what is now called Market Place. The property is now the headquarters of the Guilford Visiting Nurse Association. I am not acquainted with his early life and the family name does not appear in Talcott's Genealogy of Guilford families. He probably belonged to a New York State family, but I have found no trace of his early years except the bare fact of his being born in the Empire State. However, we do know with certainty that most of his life was spent here, and that he first came to Guilford in his youth as a stage driver. He was generally honored and placed in important offices, and his power in the town was as great as that of any man of his day with the exception of Judge Ralph Dunning Smith, lawyer and historian. The careers of the two men, one an ardent democrat of the oldest school, and the other a strict republican of the Lincoln type, ran almost abreast of each other for thirty or more years. One was of the brusque, warrior type, of abundant "choler," and of iron will; and it was indeed a brave man who hazarded the experience of a political argument with him; the other was a less turbulent character, possessed of deep scholarly instincts, a legal, scholastic mind, of vast accomplishments; a scholar and a historian select and certain in his trends. Phelps was of small stature, and had club feet. Smith was tall, stately, impressive, and a man set apart in many ways.

Early in his life here he married Emeline Munger, daughter of Miles Munger whose house was the one in which Franklin Phelps spent the remainder of his life. He had a store on State Street near the corner of Broad and State streets, facing east. It was a sort of general

FRANKLIN COLLINS PHELPS

store, and during the years inclusive from 1853 to 1861 this was the Post Office of the town. From at least one source I have been informed that the old red tape system of holding letters for their recipients still obtained during the eight years the Post Office was on State Street. It occupied only a very small section of the store, although the postal system had materially grown during the previous seventy or more years of its history. It is said of him as has been previously stated that in his very early years he was the driver of a stage coach carrying the mail between New Haven and Guilford; and it is probable that he settled here after many visits to Guilford.

Postmaster Phelps served his third term from 1867 to 1869 following the expiration of Dr. Hutchinson's term, when the latter left the town. He moved the office during that time to the old store known in later days as Henry Chamberlain's meat market and which stood for many years at the corner of Park and Broad streets. It was an old landmark to Guilford folk, was of unknown origin, but it had housed mercantile establishments for many years. Mr. Phelps had moved his business there previous to his third appointment as Postmaster. A general store business was carried on by him in that building in the same manner as on State Street. He remained in that location and in that business until his death.

Mr. Phelps was an ardent and a life-long Methodist, and he played an important part in the founding of the local church, now extinct.

The Methodist Church, at least in this community, was formed through the efforts of Rev. Nathan Kellogg who

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preached, it is recorded in Steiner's history, his first sermon after the formation of the local church, in the house of Mr. Ebenezer Hopson in Boston Street. The Methodist church building, now the furniture store of Nelson H. Griswold, was erected in 1837 and 1838, and the church was dedicated soon after. The first board of trustees consisted of Franklin C. Phelps, as well as John Hale, William Hale, Henry Griffing, Samuel Leete, Samuel A. Barker, Lucius Elliott and Alvah Kelsey of Moose Hill.

Throughout his life, or rather, from that period, he was deeply and substantially interested in the welfare of the Methodist Church and was one of its leading members. Its fundamental principles always found a brave and a well-known defender and advocate in Mr. Phelps. He always backed his convictions in an eloquent and sometimes a "fiery" manner.

He served as a democratic representative from Guilford in the legislature of 1849, he being a colleague of Reuben Stone, also a democrat. In 1863, ten years before his death, he was elected democratic senator from this district. Mr. Phelps also served as warden of the borough of Guilford from 1860 to 1861, and up to the conclusion of his life he invariably held an important and an affectionate as well as an honourable place in the community. Although engaging in business for many years he left a very small estate.

Mr. Robinson, in "Guilford Portraits," gives us important suggestions as to why this man of small stature and rather undistinguished physical appearance held so important a leadership in the town of Guilford for so many years. He writes:

FRANKLIN COLLINS PHELPS

“Prodigious was his will, nor he unkind;
But was a marked example of a mind
To bring, and bend and hold beneath his sway,
Some things resolved to go the other way.

* * * * *

His frame was full and puffed with might restrained;
His head and dignity high hat contained.
Once Senator, twice master of the Post,
The man, in life, was in himself, a host.”

CHAPTER XIV

John Hale

May 16, 1861, to June 26, 1865

President: Abraham Lincoln.

Postmaster General: Montgomery Blair, Missouri.

John Hale, the ninth Postmaster of Guilford, was, for a generation after he held the office, known as the War Postmaster. Through his office during the Civil War period in our history came most of the mail that was received in Guilford from the battle front. Anxious fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and friends made many trips to Hale's store on the west side of Guilford Green during those crucial four years of Civil War and many heart-rending messages were taken from the delivery window of that village Post Office.

John Hale was one of the well-known Hale family that occupied places of prominence in Guilford for many years. He has been considered by many as being one of the family to which Henry Hale belonged, who lived here many years, and who also conducted a general store near the site of John Hale's store. But Henry Hale's family was from North Branford while the other Hale family had been residents in Guilford since Colonial days. Talcott's Guilford genealogies shows no connection between the two Hale families.

John Hale occupied a position of prominence in the town for a good many years. He was not only store-keeper but he held other offices and was one of the

JOHN HALE

“pillars” of the Methodist Church. He was born here December 11, 1810, and was the son of William Hale who also was born here in 1780. A brother of John Hale’s, Zebulon Hale, was also a citizen of prominence in the town, and he had his home where the present Guilford Sanitarium now stands. John Hale’s residence was the large old-fashioned mid-Victorian house on Whitfield Street, almost directly across the street from St. George’s Roman Catholic Church. It used to be occupied in later days by Jonathan Meigs Hand, brother of the famous philanthropist, Daniel Hand. This site was the original home lot of Thomas Chatfield, one of the original founders of Guilford. It is, therefore, an important place in the history of Guilford.

He married early in life, Abigail Spencer, member of another old Guilford family, and she survived him for some years. John Hale’s father, William Hale, established a general store on the west side of Guilford Green on the ground now occupied by the home of the late Dr. Walter Murless. The store was operating on that site early in the century so far as I am able to discover. It was for many years previous to 1865 one of the principal places of business in the town, and how far back of that period it is impossible to learn. It is highly probable that a store might have been located there during the Revolutionary War, but that is naturally conjectural. John Hale succeeded to his father’s business and conducted it for many years. It was one of three buildings destroyed by the great fire on the night of February 28, 1872, and which has been talked about ever since. The fire started in the house known as the Dr. Anson Foote place, next to the store. The store

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and house were destroyed in a short time, and then came the home of Mrs. Labadee, formerly the home of Benjamin Corbin, owner of probably the first drug store in Guilford. After this fire the original Hale store was not rebuilt as John Hale died by suicide (hanging) on April 2, 1872, a little more than a month after the disaster. Whether or not the excitement of the fire contributed materially to his tragic death I have not been able to ascertain as his generation has long since passed away, yet it is highly probable this catastrophe was the real cause of his act. But in the John Hale establishment was transacted much of the business of the town for a long period. The proprietor was an enthusiastic Whig, and later a leader in the newly organized Republican Party. He was a close friend of Albert B. Wildman's at the south end of the Green, and the two occupied places on the committee appointed to represent Guilford in the early efforts of Guilford to do its part in the great Civil War. The committee's personnel is described in the sketch of Mr. Albert Boardman Wildman in a preceding chapter. In the early history of the Methodist Church in this town John Hale took a leading part and continued as a devoted and leading member of the church until his death.

John Hale succeeded Franklin C. Phelps as postmaster on May 16, 1861. He was appointed by President Abraham Lincoln. He immediately established the office in his store where it took up but a small portion of the establishment. I am told that the little cage where the mail was delivered was located on the north side, about the central portion of the store, and through that small aperture passed for four years the War mail sent

JOHN HALE

to Guilford from the battlefields and the camps of the Civil War.

Previous to his becoming Postmaster Mr. Hale had represented Guilford as a member of the Connecticut General Assembly. He went there in 1860 as a republican, and he was one of the first, the party having been established in Connecticut four years before, in 1856. His colleague was Sherman Graves, father of Deacon John Graves, and a prominent citizen of the town.

A survey of Mr. Hale's life shows him to have been one of the substantial business men of the town, prominent in commercial affairs, in church and in state, and his sagacity may be properly measured by the fact that his estate, in spite of the devastation of the big fire of 1872, amounted to almost \$16,000 when it was appraised by Sylvanus Clark and Deacon Eli Parmlee.

The family has practically passed out of the life of Guilford, and as so far as this author has searched, no members of it are living here to-day.

CHAPTER XV

Samuel H. Seward

June 26, 1865, to October 26, 1865

President: Andrew Johnson.

Postmaster General: William Dennison, Ohio.

Major Samuel Henry Seward, a soldier with one of the finest of war records, occupied the position amongst Guilford's postmasters as having had the shortest term of anyone in the entire list. He served only four months, from June 26, 1865, to October 26, 1865. The reason for this was because he found himself hampered in carrying on the physical work of the office by bad wounds received, and the losing of his left arm, in the Civil War from which he had just returned.

Major Seward did not spend much time in the town of his ancestors, but did attain much fame in another section of the state where he passed the major portion of his life. Born in Guilford on April 16, 1835, he was one of eleven children born to Samuel Lee Seward. His brother was the late patent attorney of New York and Washington, D. C., Edward C. Seward; and Frederick W. H. Seward, a business man of Guilford and of Putnam for many years, is another brother. His sister, Miss Kate Seward, the former well-known school teacher, here and elsewhere, is still living, a resident of State Street. Major Seward's early life was spent in Guilford, and he attended in course the Guilford Institute as well as the famous old school kept

SAMUEL H. SEWARD

by Major Samuel Robinson at the West Side, which had a widespread reputation for many years. After that he went to Indianapolis, Indiana, where he attended a business school. While in that city he was married, October 5, 1858, to Martha A. Smith. He married the second time, Sarah Maria Watson, in 1867. After leaving Indiana he worked in a factory in New Haven, and when the war started enlisted on August 15, 1862, in Company I, 14th Connecticut Volunteers. He was mustered into the service on August 23 of that year, and was later made a second lieutenant in Company I. He was in the battle of Antietam September 17, 1862, and later received a major wound on his left arm in the celebrated Battle of the Wilderness in Virginia. This wound resulted in the loss of his arm, amputated soon after the battle, and which left him so badly maimed.

Unable, of course, when he recovered to do regular army work he was transferred to Washington, D. C., where he was soon appointed a paymaster of the army, with the rank of major. At the close of the war he received an honorable discharge, was mustered out in July, 1864, and returned to his native town. The next year a movement was started to have him appointed the town's Postmaster, and Lincoln did this in June. Major Seward decided to continue the Post Office in the store of John Hale, so it was not moved. After four months he found it was impossible for him to do the necessary work involved with but one hand. Therefore, he promptly sent his resignation to Washington and retired from the position. Then he became a law student with Judge Ralph Dunning Smith, and studied with the then celebrated Guilford lawyer.

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The “Law School” was the small building that stood for a great many years detached from the south end of the present residence of Dr. F. DeWitt Smith in Park Street. This was the practice obtaining for many years throughout Connecticut, and many other states. He finally became qualified to practice and was admitted to the bar. His first scene of legal activity was in the town of Stafford Springs where he lived for a short time, and then he moved to Putnam, the seat of Windham County. In that town in the northeastern corner of Connecticut he passed the remainder of his life. Entering the town almost unknown the young man became one of the leading lawyers of the county, occupied various offices during his career, and was for a great many years the County Clerk, and also the Clerk of the Superior Court of Windham County. These offices he held until his death. Major Seward took a leading part in the professional as well as the social life of the town and the county.

Major Seward was a well-known and impressive speaker throughout the state especially on the occasions of Grand Army meetings and kindred celebrations. He was often heard in Guilford his native town, and was looked upon as not only an excellent orator, but also as having had one of the best war records of any of the men who went to the conflict from this town. In Putnam, up to a short time before his death, which took place May 8, 1901, he was active in all the important activities in the town, was a leading member of the Putnam Congregational Church, and President of the Day-Kimball Hospital of that town. He was buried in Alderbrook Cemetery in Guilford.

CHAPTER XVI

Henry Ellsworth Norton

October 26, 1865, to April 25, 1867

President: Andrew Johnson.

Postmaster General: William Dennison, Ohio.

Major Seward's successor as Postmaster was Henry Ellsworth Norton, a young man who had come to Guilford a few years before from his home in North Madison. He was born there August 3, 1836, and was the son of Ellsworth Norton, a well-known, respected farmer of that section. Soon after coming to Guilford this young man started to forge ahead at a rather rapid pace, and he was one of the men of prominence who signed the call for a special town meeting in 1860 for the purpose of taking action on Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops. The signers of that petition were for the most part men very much older than Norton, and were in most instances the leading citizens of the town. His education was understood to be of an ordinary character, but he seems to have possessed much native ability which pushed him forward in what was considered unusual rapidity for so young a man, especially one who was not born within the limits of the township.

Therefore, at the age of twenty-nine years this man received the appointment as Guilford's postmaster, and he took up the duties of the office at once. He decided, as did Major Seward before him, to continue the Post Office in the business establishment of John Hale where it had been located for some years past, in fact

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since the early portion of the Civil War. The old store on the west side of the Green seemed to have had a monopoly for some years on housing the Post Office of the town. A man who was connected with the Hale store at the time, and who was well-known and acted as an assistant to Postmaster Norton, was George A. Foote, son of the late Dr. Anson Foote, whose home was the next building north of the Post Office.

Previous to his appointment as postmaster Mr. Norton had represented the town of Guilford in the 1864 session of the General Assembly. He was elected to that office as a republican when he was only twenty-eight years of age. His colleague at that session was John Hooker Bartlett, a man very well known in the community.

Soon after his entrance into the town Mr. Norton became a member of the Third Congregational Church and he was prominent in the life of that organization for a long time. He was honored by being elected a deacon of the church in 1877, at the age of forty-one years, serving until 1880. He was also the superintendent of the Sunday School.

But Mr. Norton's greatest ability seemed to center around the business activities of Guilford, and for some time after he became a resident he figured in a large way in the commercial and manufacturing circles of the town. In the year 1868, J. W. Schermerhorn of New York established a business here on South High Street where previously, since 1868, J. S. Norton had conducted a brass foundry. Norton's business was unsuccessful. The author has been told that H. E. Norton soon after his removal to Guilford entered the service of the Schermerhorn concern. This business proved eminently successful at first, but later their trade fell off rapidly,

HENRY ELLSWORTH NORTON

and in 1877 financial setbacks caused Schermerhorn to close the factory. Almost immediately after this took place another company was organized which was called the Enterprise Manufacturing Company, and on October 22, 1877, commenced to occupy the building previously owned by Mr. Schermerhorn. This was a local affair composed entirely of Guilford men. The president was Christopher Spencer; the secretary, Henry E. Norton. The original capital was placed at \$10,000; but in a few months it was increased to \$15,000, and in October, 1881, the capital was still further increased to \$30,000. For quite a period this company was uncommonly successful, according to Steiner's History of Guilford. But the historian later asserts that an "unfortunate choice of managers and a disastrous fire in May of 1884" operated to reduce the capital structure to \$15,000, and to erect a new brick building to replace the wooden one. A substantial effort was made to once more reach success. But the plant finally closed soon after the occupancy of the new building.

Soon after this manufacturing company ceased its activities Henry E. Norton, with his family, quitted Guilford where he had occupied positions of honor and of trust for a long time and with his family removed, around 1885, to Keneshaw, Nebraska. An effort was made to ascertain the nature of Mr. Norton's activities after he went to Nebraska, but it was without success.

He lived in that western town for fifteen years and died there on November 2, 1900, at the age of sixty-five years. His body was brought to this town and interred in Alderbrook Cemetery beside that of his wife, who was Miss Lucy A. Munger, and who died in Guilford long before her husband, on March 5, 1880, aged forty-five years.

CHAPTER XVII

Charles Griswold

March 4, 1869, to March 29, 1886

Presidents: U. S. Grant, R. B. Hayes, J. A. Garfield, C. A. Arthur.
Postmaster Generals: John A. Creswell, Md.; J. W. Marshall, Va.; Marshall Jewell, Conn.; David McKey, Tenn.; Horace Maynard, Tenn.; Thomas L. James, N. Y.; T. A. Howe, Wis.; W. Q. Gresham, Ind.; Frank Hatton, Iowa; W. F. Vilas, Wis.; D. M. Dickinson, Mich.

In many ways Captain Charles Griswold was the most important postmaster Guilford ever had. He not only served the longest term continuously of any of the twenty-one persons who held the office, but he also during his life held a most important state position. For slightly over seventeen years Captain Griswold was the Postmaster of Guilford, and it is said that during that long period of his incumbency no one probably ever conducted the business in a more thoroughly efficient manner. He brought to the office rare business sagacity coupled with modernized methods so that Guilford was served in a manner they had not experienced before. It was much like parting with an old and beloved friend when he at last left the office but his record had set an all-time high record for ability and continuity.

He came from an old Guilford family. He was the son of Joel Griswold and Polly Bartlett, being born here on July 26, 1841, and he was the youngest of nine children. He attended the Guilford Institute which

CHARLES GRISWOLD

had been established when he was only fourteen years old, and at the age of twenty-one years, on August 5, 1862, he enlisted in Guilford for the Civil War. He was mustered in as sergeant of Company E, 15th C. V., on August 25 of that year, and his service was of a high order. He was promoted on February 8, 1864, to be captain of Company B, 29th C. V., and he served in that capacity until the close of the conflict. Captain Griswold, after a brilliant record, was mustered out of the service October 24, 1865. Returning to Guilford he took up his residence here and remained the rest of his life. He was variously honored by the people of Guilford and for a great many years was undoubtedly and properly considered one of the town's most important and valued citizens. In 1869, when he was twenty-eight years of age, Captain Griswold was appointed Postmaster of the town to succeed Henry E. Norton. The first thing he did was to remove the office from its old location in John Hale's store to an addition to what was for many years known as Music Hall building on the west side of the Green. It was the first time in the history of the Guilford Post Office that it had occupied "quarters" of its own. Formerly, and for eighty years past, it had been a sort of side show, either in the home of the postmaster, or in his place of business. Therefore, for the next seventeen years it remained in that location and in that building, although at a later period the quarters were also shared somewhat by the then recently organized Guilford Savings Bank.

The administration of the office under Captain Griswold was most satisfactory, and we may almost declare it to have been the local opening of the modern

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postal era. Mail had been coming to Guilford by steam train for some years then and improvements were gradually being made all along the line so that there was little remaining of the system obtaining in the very early years of the century. The Post Office was located in the Music Hall building for so many years it became almost a sort of fixture in the town, and few could easily visualize its being operated elsewhere. Finally, however, when Grover Cleveland was elected in 1884, it resulted in a new Postmaster, and the quarters formerly used by the Post Office were then devoted entirely to the Guilford Savings Bank of which Captain Griswold had for a long time past been the efficient treasurer. He occupied that position with the exception of four years for the remaining portion of his life.

When he left the Post Office, Captain Griswold became interested in all public matters and was a very busy man. At a town meeting held in October, 1888, for the purpose of considering celebrating the 250th anniversary of the founding of Guilford the following year, Captain Griswold, on the motion of Rev. E. M. Vittum, was named as the secretary of the committee of twelve to have charge of the important event which took place in September, 1889. He served in this capacity until he was forced to tender his resignation on August 7, 1889, and his place was then taken by Samuel H. Chittenden of East River.

During his life after he left the army, Captain Griswold was a leading member of the Grand Army of the Republic and gave much time and service to that organization. The Parmlee Post, G. A. R., was organized June 17, 1873, in the little room over Henry Mack's

CHARLES GRISWOLD

harness store in Water Street, and of course Captain Griswold was one of its earliest and most important members.

Following the election of Morgan Gardiner Bulkeley of Hartford as the fifty-first Governor of Connecticut in 1888, Captain Griswold was appointed by the Governor as one of the two Banking Commissioners of the state. He assumed his new duties in January, 1889, and served for four years. His appointment was for only two years, but as Governor Bulkeley "held over" an additional two years on account of the fact that Luzon B. Morris of New Haven did not receive a plurality of the votes cast in the election of 1890, Captain Griswold, as did most of the State's appointive officers, continued in the office for another two years. The duties of the State Bank Commissioners at that time was far more extensive than it has been in recent years. During the period he served the State all of the financial institutions, such as Building and Loan Associations, Insurance Companies of all sorts, and all chartered financial institutions in the state with the exception of National Banks, were under the charge of the State Banking Commission. This meant a vast amount of detailed work, and it also meant that the Commission, of which Captain Griswold was the head, had to personally examine every institution in any portion of the country where Connecticut Banks, etc., had investments or financial interests. This large amount of work took him for long periods to all portions of the United States, and he not only visited every state in the Union but he also visited them more or less frequently. It was no uncommon event for him to be absent on one of these

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trips for more than a month at a time. His work on the commission was of a high order, and won abundant praise for him from leading financial men of the era. Soon after he terminated his work as a Bank Commissioner, Harvey W. Spencer, treasurer of the Guilford Savings Bank, died in November, 1894, to the regret of the community, and Captain Griswold was chosen to again assume his old position to succeed Mr. Spencer as treasurer of the bank. This bank was later merged with the Guilford Trust Company at the opening of the present century, and he remained with the bank as an official until he died, November 6, 1921, after a long life of great service to his country, his state, and to his native town. From any standpoint one wishes to review this man's career one inevitably concludes that he was one of Guilford's leading and most appreciated citizens for much over a generation. He was a man of high honor, much ability, and a citizen Guilford has always been proud to call her son. Mrs. Griswold survived him for some years, and she died in January, 1934, one of the most beloved and respected women of the town.

CHAPTER XVIII

Harvey Walter Spencer

March 28, 1886, to March 7, 1890

President: Grover Cleveland.

Postmaster General: W. F. Vilas, Wisconsin.

Harvey Walter Spencer, the thirteenth postmaster of Guilford, has been dead for forty years, yet his name is often mentioned to-day, and he is generally referred to as one of the finest characters that Guilford produced during the years he lived here. Possessed of rare qualities, a man of keen business judgment and superior qualifications for public office, he left behind a name for probity and high standard of citizenship that will endure for many years to come. The author of this history was well acquainted with this fine man and he counts it one of the choice recollections of his early life that he was his friend, although nearly a quarter of a century older than the writer. The Spencer family has been prominent for a great many years in the history of Guilford and has produced many men who have occupied high places among those characters who have given this old town a name that caused men like the first President Dwight of Yale College many years ago to classify it in the higher brackets.

Harvey Walter Spencer was born at the West Side in the old Spencer homestead that has for five generations been the home of Spencers who have played an important rôle in the history of the town. He was the son of the

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late Henry R. Spencer, a man of sterling qualities, one of the leading farmers of the town, and a man widely honored and appreciated. The young man's early years were passed as most Guilford boys passed them. He went to the District School, helped as a boy in the work of the farm, later attended the recently formed Guilford Institute, as did his predecessor, Charles Griswold, but did not finish the usual course of four years. It is said of him that as a boy he was rather shy, or diffident, and on account of this he did not participate in the then very popular public speaking or the debates which were then one of the principal scholastic events held each week in the old school. In this Forum the late orator W. H. H. Murray made his first public addresses. On account of this fact Mr. Spencer did not complete the usual course but left school and for a time helped about the farm. Farm life did not apparently appeal to him so as a young man he secured a position as a clerk in the then well-known general store of Henry Hale, occupying almost the same ground as that of the late John Hale who had died some years before and whose place of business was burned.

He entered the store when he was in his early twenties, I am told, and remained there upwards of ten years. He was the bookkeeper of the establishment as well as a clerk, and he occupied the two positions with success and satisfaction. He seemed destined to spend most if not all of his life in the Hale establishment because he not only filled the dual position with complete success, but the customers of the store liked him and hoped he would not leave the service. During that period he was clerk of the borough, from 1878 to 1886. However, his

HARVEY WALTER SPENCER

most important life work was destined to be served not as a merchant or as an accountant, but as the first Postmaster appointed by a democratic President since the Civil War, and the treasurer of the Guilford Savings Bank. When Grover Cleveland was elected in 1884 it naturally meant a change in management of the Post Office. The long term of Charles Griswold was terminated after a most prolonged record of satisfactory service.

Of course this was a great chance for the democratic party, for the last democrat to have occupied the office was the doughty and more or less fiery Franklin Phelps who had then been dead for eleven years.

Many names were mentioned for the office. It had been conducted on such a high level of efficiency during the previous seventeen years that many shoulders were adroitly shrugged and men freely expressed the opinion that it was a mistake to "swap postmasters" as a result of the elections. But good old Andrew Jackson had inaugurated the practice and nobody had seriously objected to it in either political parties. Both sides seemed to like the "swapping" idea. However, Guilford was loath to experiment in Postmasters after such a recent exhibition of how the Post Office ought to be operated. Whom to choose for this position became a matter of almost public debate. Suddenly the name of Harvey Walter Spencer was announced. It is said that Mr. Spencer made no advances himself, but that friends quietly presented his name before the new democratic President, and he was promptly named for the office. He started his work near the first of April in 1886.

The first thing he did to make the change more com-

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plete was to move the office from its old location where Mr. Griswold had established it in 1869 to a small, queer looking sort of a building on the east side of Guilford Green. This building had been erected about forty years previously, had a “fleet” of uncomfortably steep stairs leading to its front door, and it had been for some years the drug store conducted by the late Harris Pendleton, Jr., who came here as a young man from New London soon after the Civil War. He had been the town’s druggist for many years, a representative in the General Assembly, and clerk of the borough for a long time in the seventies. The building stood on the same lot as the present Town Hall, but very near the old house now standing immediately south of the town’s property. It is now a masonic club house.

In this building Mr. Spencer conducted the Post Office for the next four years. He made an excellent postal official and people who had feared at first that the local Post Office could never be carried on with such success by a democrat as attended Charles Griswold’s administration, were soon drastically disillusioned. All through the four years the Guilford Post Office, although in new and strange quarters, kept to the high level the town had become accustomed to, and it is said that if the people themselves could have done so they would have nominated and elected Harvey Spencer their Postmaster the remainder of his life. But politics again interferred and Grover Cleveland went the way of all democrats of that period, so that when the four years had elapsed the office was again in different hands.

It was with a feeling of deep regret that Guilford people parted with Mr. Spencer as their Postmaster.

HARVEY WALTER SPENCER

The memory of those days is still fresh in the mind of this author, and he remembers easily the "sadness of farewell" as was demonstrated by them when the "democratic" postmaster retired to private life. But Harvey Spencer did not have a chance to be in the private life class for very long. Charles Griswold had recently resigned his place as treasurer of the Guilford Savings Bank to become State Bank Commissioner. Therefore, the trustees of the Savings Bank promptly appointed Mr. Spencer as their treasurer, and in this position he spent the next four years of his life. This place he held with the same characteristic success that had attended everything he did in a public capacity. The bank grew and prospered under his leadership. On the board of trustees at that time were leading men of Guilford, but none of them ever regretted choosing this able, kindly man to assume their most important post.

Mr. Spencer's popularity and high reputation in the town at that time exceeded, perhaps, in the author's opinion, any other man of his era. He could easily have been appointed or chosen to any office within the gift of the people. Had he lived, his career would without doubt have been a long line of large successes. But that was not to be. On November 28th, 1894, when he was only forty-three years of age, he died rather suddenly after a brief illness. Few public figures have been so deeply missed as he was missed. It was a personal loss to every citizen of the town. They realized that an unusual man, as well as one of their most successful business characters in Guilford, had been speedily taken from them. The sorrow was widespread and intimate.

The leading citizens accompanied his body that cold,

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stormy, November day when he was taken to the Alderbrook Cemetery. All knew that a splendid citizen and a man of the finest character had left then for all time.

As the Guilford poet, Fitz Greene Halleck, wrote of his friend, Joseph Rodman Drake, the author says of Harvey Walter Spencer:

“Green be the turf above thee
Friend of my better days.”

CHAPTER XIX

George N. Bradley

March 7, 1890, to May 22, 1894

President: Benjamin Harrison.

Postmaster General: John Wanamaker, Penn.

The fourteenth Postmaster of Guilford, George N. Bradley, was the son of William Frederick Bradley of Madison. The Postmaster's father was among the last of that famous band of Guilford shoemakers about whom Dr. Steiner, the historian, gives some space in his History of Guilford. These shoemakers had a high reputation for their work throughout the State, and it is said that a century or more ago Guilford led all the towns of Connecticut in its production of shoes. William Frederick Bradley learned his trade from one of the old masters, Martin Dowd, a brother of Deacon Julius Albert Dowd of Guilford, whose work room was in the northern annex of the old Amos Seward house. George N. Bradley was born in Madison on December 8, 1850, and his early life was spent there. His father, a very well-known citizen, was also a farmer as well as a shoemaker, as was often the case in both Madison and Guilford. When he was old enough he did what all other Madison boys did, who could, and attended the well-known old Lee's Academy. This was one of the most famous educational institutions of the section. It was the result of activity on the part of Captain Frederick Lee, who, with some other men early in the last century, erected an academy in what is now the Neck

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District of Madison. It was first under the charge of the celebrated Samuel Robinson of Guilford, but later was conducted by several Yale graduates. Mr. Robinson returned at a subsequent period, however. Later on the building was moved to the central portion of the town where half a century or more ago the Center School occupied the first floor. In this school Mr. Bradley studied for some years and then left to assist in work on his father's farm. When the young man was around twenty years of age he decided to follow a different career than his father, and came to Guilford where he entered the service of J. S. Schermerhorn whose activities here were described in the chapter on Henry E. Norton. Young Mr. Bradley was connected with this factory for some years when it was enjoying the "heyday" of its rather brief period of prosperity. He boarded at the home of Captain William Dudley whose stately house, now the residence of Lawyer George C. Conway, occupied what is said to have been the site of Samuel Desborough's home in 1640. His living in the Dudley home resulted in his marrying Captain Dudley's daughter, Miss Dorcas Dudley, in 1872. He continued living in the residence of Captain Dudley and on the latter's death made it practically his home the remainder of his life.

When the Schermerhorn establishment went out of business Mr. Bradley turned his hand to carpentry and therefore became one of the town's esteemed wood workers. His specialty was what is described as "inside work," and he had an excellent reputation. During this period he was elected one of the constables of Guilford, and he acted successfully in this capacity for some years.

GEORGE N. BRADLEY

He grew to be one of the well-known and valued citizens of his adopted town and had the good will of all those who knew him.

From the time he entered the town he was one of the stalwart republicans of Guilford, and was always interested in the party's success. He rose high in its councils and he was one of the leading workers for republican victory at every election, whether large or small.

As a result of his assiduous activity in the party he was a man to be reckoned with in local affairs. Therefore, it was not at all surprising, when upon the return of the republican party to power in the election of 1888, and the choice of Benjamin Harrison for President, that Mr. Bradley was one of the foremost candidates to be brought forward for Postmaster. There was more or less friendly rivalry at the time but Bradley was far and away ahead at the start and won the prize. His appointment dated from March 7, 1890, and he served the usual four years. He chose to occupy the same little building where Harvey Walter Spencer conducted the office and so the Post Office remained in that location for the next four years. One of the wisest acts of his administration was when he selected as his assistant Miss Mary Bishop Griswold, a recent graduate from the Guilford Institute, and a member of one of the old and respected families of Guilford. She served with Mr. Bradley throughout his term and later with another Postmaster. As a result of her outstanding service and popularity as a postal clerk she was later appointed as the first woman to serve as Postmaster in this town.

Mr. Bradley, with his usual careful and intelligent application to the work, gave the public an excellent

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administration, and he won the praise of all who had watched him rise from humble beginnings to a position of much importance. In 1892 a democratic president was elected and naturally a Postmaster who held that faith was appointed to succeed Mr. Bradley. This next postmaster was the late George E. Meigs, a well-known citizen of the town. He appointed former Postmaster Bradley as his chief assistant, and the latter actually ran the office for the time that elapsed until Mr. Meigs died suddenly in the summer of 1897. Miss Griswold also was appointed as a clerk in the office, but her activities and fine stewardship will be told of in a later chapter.

Soon after this when Mr. Bradley had retired to private life he was appointed as a deputy sheriff of New Haven County for the town of Guilford. In this work, for which he had an unusual aptitude, he won signal success. He was a model deputy sheriff and won praise from all sources. Possessed of the proper amount of nerve he coupled with that remarkably good judgement, and he left a record of service which was a credit to him and to his office.

His wife died in the Spring of 1923, and for some years prior to his death in December, 1932, Mr. Bradley lived with his son, George D. Bradley, near New Haven. His body was brought to Guilford and placed beside that of his wife.

Postmaster Bradley's life may be said to have been an eminent success, for he never had backing of any sort when he entered the town, and what he accomplished was the result of his own ability and painstaking, thorough application to whatever he had in hand.

CHAPTER XX

George E. Meigs

May 22, 1894, to July 24, 1897

President: Grover Cleveland.

Postmaster General: Wilson S. Bissell, Buffalo, N. Y.

The appointment of George E. Meigs, well-known citizen, by President Grover Cleveland in May, 1894, marked the second democratic Postmaster to hold that position since the close of the Civil War. The term of Mr. Meigs was materially shortened by death, as he died in a little over three years after he was appointed. While he was Postmaster of Guilford an event took place the character of which has never before, so far as the author has been able to learn, been recorded in the history of Guilford's Postmasters.

During the time that Mr. Meigs was Postmaster there lived at Madison Beach near East River, each summer, the Hon. Wilson S. Bissell, a famous lawyer of Buffalo, N. Y. He was a member of the famous law firm of Cleveland, Milburn and Bissell, and upon the second election of Mr. Cleveland as President in the Fall of 1892, the latter appointed his former law partner as Postmaster General of the United States. It had been the custom for a long time previous to 1893 for a so-called colony of prominent Buffalo residents to come to the beach near the Neck in East River to spend the heated season. Each of them owned what was then a palatial "Cottage." Prominent in that group was the

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late John G. Milburn, at whose home in Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, N. Y., on September 14, 1901, President William McKinley died eight days after he had been shot at the Buffalo Exposition. Postmaster General Bissell's home was near Mr. Milburn's in East River, and each of the famous lawyers were frequently seen driving about the streets of Guilford. Mr. Bissell was an enormously heavy man, and it was said that a specially arranged carriage seat had to be constructed for him so he could sit on it comfortably and drive about the country. Automobiles were then in the far distant offing. It was not an uncommon sight to see the unusually large Postmaster General of the United States slowly moving along the streets of the town obviously enjoying himself to his heart's content, though he always attracted much attention. This was not because of his being a famous democrat or on account of his high position in the government of the nation, or of his close relations with the then President of the United States,—but rather because he was far and away the largest man, except Sheriff William Hull of Madison, so far as avoirdupois was concerned, ever seen in Guilford. No man or woman then living here could recall anything in comparison with the exalted weight of this famous lawyer.

The great postal event of the century's history of the postal system in Guilford took place one summer's day in 1894, when the Postmaster General of the United States paid a visit to local Postmaster George E. Meigs at his home in Whitfield Street. It was an informal call. I have always supposed that it originated through the suggestion of the Hon. Lynde Harrison, distin-

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guished lawyer of this town, a friend of Cleveland's and of Bissell's, who was more instrumental than anybody else in having Mr. Meigs appointed. The visit was almost on a par with the brief sojourn of the Marquis de LaFayette in Guilford in 1824, but of course it did not draw as large a crowd because it was unheralded and briefly and quietly arranged. What the Postmaster General of the United States said to Mr. Meigs was not reported at the time and the event did not even find a place on the first page of either of the two local papers in Guilford or the New Haven journals. It was a considerably different affair than the hubub that would naturally take place to-day if it were announced that Postmaster General James A. Farley was to call on Postmaster Sullivan. Few knew of the call.

Postmaster Meigs was born here August 7, 1836, in the old house on Whitfield Street in which he made his home during the greatest portion of his life. The house is now and has been for some time the property of Charles Taintor, and the other building on the same lot which was formerly the Post Office is now owned by Mrs. Leatherberry. He was the son of Erastus Meigs, a well-known citizen, whose name appears in Steiner's History of Guilford on account of road improvements which took place during his life. The townspeople decided in a town meeting held March 15, 1869, to spend \$600 for the construction of forty rods of macadam on the highway, then known as Harbor Street, and commencing from in front of the Meigs house. The road was then more or less a continuous mass of a most undesirable brand of mud. This sum was not found sufficient to make much of a splash in that stretch of mud

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so it was voted later on March 18, 1887, to appropriate the additional sum of \$5,000 towards the project. This sum was later added to by private subscription so Mr. Meigs' house in those days was more or less located at the "head of navigation" on what had been recently changed from Harbor to Whitfield Street.

George Meigs' life was passed in the town of his birth. He belonged to a well-known family, but almost all of them are now gone, at least so far as Guilford is concerned. He attended the nearby school, and the Guilford Institute. For many years he conducted a wine and liquor store, of what was then considered the "élite" variety, in a building erected for the purpose on the south half of the Meigs home lot. This establishment was probably the neatest of its kind outside of England, and supposedly the spirituous purveyor to the tastes of the patrician members of the local population. Besides this liquor store Mr. Meigs devoted much of his time to the raising of handsome St. Bernard dogs of which he was inordinately fond. He was the only person in this section who showed anything like the interest in these noble dogs as compared to the people of Switzerland, especially the Austrian section, where they are bred. It was a common sight to see several of these fine animals in his trim and well-kept yard any time of the day.

During the greater portion of his life Mr. Meigs lived alone in the fine old family house where he died. Here his father and his grandfather had lived and died before him. When he took the place it was not distinguished from the other houses in the vicinity. Among his most conspicuous traits was an unusual degree of neatness. Anything he ever had any connection with had to be

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conducted in the most exemplary fashion. As a result of this propensity he created what was considered the most attractive looking home in Guilford during its later years. He had the yard carefully laid out along the lines of the prevailing "mode" in landscape gardening. Along the paths of the beautiful, well-groomed lawn were hosts of lovely roses of uncommonly attractive quality. It was said forty varieties of roses were in full view of the street. Directly in the rear of his home were fine exhibitions of shrubbery and clinging vines festooned over the paths in a remarkably artistic manner that attracted attention far and wide.

Added to this scene of loveliness were several highly elevated dove-cots in which dwelt pigeons of various kinds. There were also large numbers of proud "fan-tail" pigeons than which nothing more select in that line of birds was ever seen in this town. All in all everybody agreed then and later that his was far and away the best kept place in Guilford at that period.

Mr. Meigs was appointed Postmaster, as has been stated, by President Cleveland and immediately moved the office from the odd little building on the east side of Guilford Green, where it had been located for the preceding eight years. Mr. Meigs apparently took the Post Office job because it was offered to him. At the time, it was not understood he had not sought the office but that it was more or less forced upon him. There were several other democrats in the town who were quite anxious to obtain the place, but it did not go to them. The first innovation Mr. Meigs made when he became the "master of the post" was to draft former Postmaster George N. Bradley as his assistant and Miss Mary Bishop Griswold

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(Bradley's assistant), to serve throughout the four years. They both accepted, and soon the public had a new Postmaster with the old set-up conducting the office. Mr. Meigs did not enter into the affairs of the office to any considerable extent for he was not then in good health and he had more or less retired from any sort of active business.

However, Mr. Meigs was wise enough to supply himself with the former republican postal force so that Guilford had the unique distinction, while he served, of having a full-fledged democratic chief, and a one hundred per cent republican force.

At this period the Guilford Post Office was well started on its second century of existence in the town and there were vast changes in effect. They were not recognizable by the public because they had become operative in a slow, methodical manner. However, if any of the earlier Postmasters who had served in the long ago (Medad Stone, for instance) had been asked to survey the establishment of 1894 they would have doubted their ability to properly encompass the situation. Great changes had slowly been developed the same as there had in every other governmental department. But to-day the author supposes the Post Office standard of 1894 would seem vaguely incompetent and colorless to that of 1934. The present-day postal officials probably wonder how it was that the patient postal workers of 1895 were able to produce the excellent results that are reported from that far-away era.

Through the years of 1896 and 1897 Mr. Meigs was in more or less poor health. His last illness took place in June of 1897 and he died on July 1 of that year.

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George N. Bradley was immediately appointed acting Postmaster by Mr. Meigs' bondsmen to fill the place. But the story of the next administration will be told in the next chapter.

Postmaster Meigs was a well-known man in Guilford's life for a great many years. He had many friends, he was always courteous, generous and kind, and he could with truth be called a real gentleman of the régime. Although he was only sixty-one years old when he died he had long been known as a man of the past generation and considered to be much older than he really was, both in looks and in his social intercourse with men.

CHAPTER XXI

Mary Bishop Griswold

July 24, 1897, to January 14, 1898

Mary B. G. Bullard

January 14, 1898, to January 16, 1902

President: William McKinley.

Postmaster Generals: James A. Gary, Indiana; Charles Emory Smith, Pennsylvania; Henry C. Payne, Wisconsin.

Immediately following the death of Postmaster George E. Meigs, there was staged one of the most spectacular political scrimmages between republicans that Guilford had yet witnessed. It startled the town from border to border. A fight of the first magnitude was carried on that attracted the attention of the Connecticut press as well as the press of neighboring states. The disturbance took place as a result of the eagerness of potential republican candidates to secure the place formerly held by Mr. Meigs, which paid \$1,500 a year to the incumbent. Six candidates appeared in the ring and the result was that political circles were severely distorted for some weeks in the pleasant summer of 1897.

In July of 1897, Postmaster Meigs died, as was stated in the preceding chapter. Mary Bishop Griswold, daughter of the late Captain Thomas Griswold, was soon awarded the prize as his successor and was formally appointed by President McKinley on the recommendation of Congressman N. D. Sperry of New Haven. This

MARY BISHOP GRISWOLD—MARY B. G. BULLARD

being long before the days of Woman's Suffrage, the appointment naturally created something of a stir, not only from a political as well as from a party standpoint. The fact that Miss Griswold won the place over the heads of six male candidates, and that she was the first and only woman ever to hold the position, did not lessen the attractive features of the situation. Miss Griswold had served with conspicuous success as assistant to the late postmaster, as she had to his predecessor, Mr. Bradley. Her whole service had then covered a period of more than six years. No one doubted her outstanding capability. She had given not only complete satisfaction to the people of Guilford but also to the super-critical eyes of the postal authorities at Washington, then as now, experts in the gentle art of finding flaws in human beings who have to handle the business of the department. Immediately after Miss Griswold was appointed, the new Postmaster announced a change in the Post Office site. It had been housed for four years in the former wine and spirit store of Mr. Meigs in Whitfield Street. This had not suited many of the town's citizens, and had been looked upon with much general dissatisfaction. When, therefore, Miss Griswold announced the Post Office would henceforth be located on Boston Street in a building owned by John Landon of New Haven and formerly occupied as a drug store by S. A. Richards, there was indeed a welcome sigh of relief. The building had been newly painted, decorated and arranged for the Post Office where it remained until 1903. It has been used as a residence since that time.

It was during Miss Griswold's term of office that the Rural Free Delivery was first established in Connecticut

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directly through the work of Congressman Sperry of New Haven who always took an uncommon interest in postal matters. He selected the Guilford Post Office as one of his experimental stations and the postmaster was asked to map out and institute two rural routes in the Guilford District. This was done by Miss Griswold and a departmental worker from Washington, and those routes, with some alterations, are still served from this office. In those early days the routes were covered by means of horse-drawn vehicles, and this original mapping was of no small importance. Robert DeForest Bristol and Hart Landon were the original carriers, the former covering Clapboard Hill and Nut Plains, and the latter the North Guilford route.

The short term during which Miss Griswold served was marked with unusual success and the general public were well pleased with the acumen displayed by Congressman Sperry in making the appointment of this unusually capable young woman over the heads of some seasoned politicians. During the first year of her service as Postmaster, Miss Griswold was married to Henry M. Bullard of New Haven, formerly of Guilford, and long since a leading furniture dealer of New Haven. The Postmaster's official name was therefore changed late in 1897 to Mary B. G. Bullard.

When her first term expired there was the usual scurrying about by the male aspirants for the office, who had been defeated a short time before, but the able woman again received the appointment without any effort, from President McKinley. Her second term was marked as usual by distinguished success which ended in 1902. Her assistant during this period of five years or more,

MARY BISHOP GRISWOLD—MARY B. G. BULLARD

had been Miss Elizabeth Griswold. It is said Mrs. Bullard was offered another appointment, but she declined the third term and left the service.

When this unusually satisfactory Postmaster had completed her service, it has been told the writer that no one could be found who was not ready to extend their most genuine praise for the work she had terminated. No man ever upheld the standards of the office in a more capable or a more thorough manner. She retired with the best wishes and the thanks of the entire community.

But the story of the first appointment is one which furnishes us with abundant evidences of the bitter party rancor of those far-away days. It was an event that took place years before Woman's Suffrage entered the lists, and on that account as well as others, is worthy of more than passing notice by this chronicler of the activities of the Post Office Department as it affected the people of Guilford.

When George E. Meigs died immediate steps were taken by several prominent aspirants for the office to obtain the coveted appointment. The bondsmen of Mr. Meigs immediately named the dead Postmaster's assistant, Mr. Bradley, as the acting Postmaster until one was appointed. Then the sparks commenced to fly, and they kept flying for some time. Immediately after Mr. Bradley took charge as acting Postmaster, he or his friends, started a petition for his permanent appointment. This petition contained the names of 230 persons which included the town's prominent republicans. Other petitions for the same place were speedily entered by four republicans and one democrat. The latter was

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supposed to be a “compromise” candidate. This made six applicants for the Guilford office. The situation was a hard one to solve, but Congressman Sperry considered the matter soberly as was his custom. During this fracas when the town was heartily agog over the impending appointment Miss Griswold was quietly working away in the Post Office sorting the mail, and selling postage stamps. There were no visible signs in her demeanor that she was deeply interested, except to do her work and to do it well. While her male opponents were lustily fighting over that job, a petition for her appointment was started among her friends, mostly women. When this petition was completed it contained, it was said at the period, the names of most of the able-bodied women of the town, as well as some men. It was a revolutionary thing to do, for Woman’s Suffrage was not then looked upon with much favour by the rank and file of Guilford women.

In the meantime, when Congressman Sperry was deluged with various petitions he “went into a huddle,” to use a modern phrase for the act, and consulted with the male candidates of Guilford who were anxious for the appointment. As he could not appoint but one of them he endeavored to get action on their part to solve the puzzle by agreeing on one candidate. This they would not do. He consulted Senator Joseph R. Hawley and Senator Orville H. Platt, great figures in the Congress, then as they had been for many years. As it was impossible to get the male applicants to change their tactics the Congressman then recommended to President McKinley the appointment of Miss Griswold as a Civil Service reward for the much sought for office.

MARY BISHOP GRISWOLD—MARY B. G. BULLARD

Within a short period, President McKinley appointed the first and thus far only woman Postmaster of Guilford. The incident was closed; but it left serious scars among the politicians for some years.

Closed it was, so far as Governmental action was concerned, but it was far from "closed" in the minds of some men of the town. There was deep and pronounced dissatisfaction among the friends of those who had made such strenuous efforts to secure the job. The sentiment reached such a pitch that a letter was forwarded to Congressman Sperry bearing the names of all but two of the members, it is said, of the Republican Town Committee. These two who did not sign were residents of North Guilford and were not interested particularly over the Guilford Post Office. This letter set forth the sentiment that "We, the undersigned Republican Town committee, as well as the republicans in general in Guilford, do hereby express our contempt and indignation in the appointment of a woman as Postmaster of the town of Guilford."

This naturally caused something of a stir. It reminds one now of the "passages at arms" that took place during the era of Woman's Suffrage campaigns almost a score of years later.

Various citizens wrote letters to the local as well as to the outside press. Those letters were not delicately worded, but usually struck out direct in a rather savage attack. The outside press generally, irrespective of politics, favored the appointment of Miss Griswold, and one editorial in a New Haven paper observed that Miss Griswold's opponents in Guilford must be bachelors or woman haters. Another newspaper stated that poli-

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ticians of the town prevailed on the Republican Town Committee "to issue a card insulting Congressman Sperry and such a card: neither grammatical, logical or truthful."

During this unusual episode, the oldest Republican newspaper in New Haven, long since defunct, declared editorially, "It is gratifying to learn that the appointment of a woman as Postmistress was confirmed in spite of this brave show of unreasonable and unmanly contempt and indignation."

It is also interesting to observe that almost a quarter of a century later, on November 6, 1920, the Hartford Courant, the state's oldest newspaper, commented editorially on the Guilford Post Office fight of 1897. That famous paper then declared, "Long before 1912 Mary Griswold, now Mrs. H. M. Bullard of New Haven, was appointed Postmaster of the office at Guilford in this state to the complete satisfaction of the critical residents of that town and with the approval of the late Congressman Sperry, who knew a good deal about postal affairs in his day."

Mrs. Bullard lived for many years in New Haven, held a prominent place in the cultural, artistic and serious life of the city, and was generally looked upon as one of its able and highly qualified women.

She is now a summer resident of her native town, thoroughly esteemed by her many friends, and she still holds the distinction of being the only woman who ever held the office of Postmaster of Guilford.

CHAPTER XXII

Joel Tuttle Wildman

January 16, 1902, to May 6, 1903

President: Theodore Roosevelt.

Postmaster General: Henry C. Payne, Wisconsin.

The record of Joel Tuttle Wildman as Postmaster of Guilford shows him to have been the only son of a former Postmaster to ever hold the office. His father, Albert Boardman Wildman, was first appointed in 1841 which makes a period of over two generations from the time the father started his work in the postal service and the son's appointment sixty-one years later. It is an unusual record, probably not equaled in few if any of the offices in this state.

Mr. Wildman had been one of the candidates for the office in 1897, but the "tangle" existing at that time as described in the preceding chapter, prevented him from holding office earlier. He made one of the excellent Postmasters of the town and his administration though brief was satisfactory in every respect. He was the last Postmaster to occupy the building on Boston Street, the location of which did not apparently seem to be entirely satisfactory to the townspeople. Early in the year 1903 the Post Office was moved from Boston Street to its present quarters in Monroe's building at the southwest corner of the Green.

Mr. Wildman was born in Guilford, March 28, 1841, and was the son, as has been stated, of Albert Boardman

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Wildman. As a young man he attended the Guilford Institute, then a recently organized institution, and of which the people of the town felt exceedingly proud. In those days boys who went to Yale College, or other standard colleges, did so direct from their preparation at the Guilford Institute. Good examples of this may be seen in the careers of William Henry Harrison Murray, Henry P. Robinson, Bernard Christian Steiner, Justice John Wallace Banks of the Connecticut Supreme Court, Mr. Wildman and others.

Mr. Wildman was a studious young man and early evidenced the traits that later made him one of the best informed and most cultured citizens of this or of any other coastal town. Entering Yale College in a class which contained several Guilford boys, in the Fall of 1859, he pursued the four years' academical course and was graduated with the degree of Master of Arts in the Spring of 1863 at the age of twenty-one years. He made an excellent record during his college course, especially in English and the purely academical studies, and distinguished himself among the members of his class which, by the way, contained a large number of brilliant students. In that class graduating with him were Henry Pynchon Robinson, Walter G. Smith, Rev. George Wallace Banks, Uriah Nelson Parmelee, and Charles Carroll Blatchley, all from Guilford and vicinity. Another young man in that class who later became one of the wealthiest men in the United States and Secretary of the United States Navy under President Cleveland, was William C. Whitney of New York City. During Mr. Wildman's college career he had the reputation of being one of the best students of his class and

JOEL TUTTLE WILDMAN

attracted attention in a company of unusually intelligent young men.

The young man's father, a leading merchant, had long been a close personal friend of the most important business man in Guilford, Judge Joel Tuttle, who lived in the old house next west of Mr. Robert Spencer's home in Broad Street. Mr. Tuttle died in May, 1855, but his name was to be carried on for a great many years thereafter because Albert B. Wildman honored his friend by naming his son after the Guilford merchant. Therefore, the name of Joel Tuttle did not disappear until the death of Mr. Wildman forty-eight years after the death of the man for whom he was named.

The Civil War was being fiercely waged at the time of his graduation from Yale and he immediately entered the conflict. In a short time, probably on account of his high standing at Yale, he was appointed an assistant to the acting paymaster general of the United States Navy. Immediately entering upon his duties in this important position he was assigned to the Portsmouth, N. H., Navy Yard. Later on he was assigned to the old man-of-war Merrimac and served on that ship at the time of her being wrecked in the Gulf of Mexico. When the war was terminated he entered the service of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company where he served in various executive departments with success as he did in all his positions. Returning to Guilford when this railroad work was completed, Mr. Wildman was offered an office position with the then important and recently arrived quarry owner of this section, Mr. John Beattie of Leete's Island. This business had not been long established when Mr. Wildman became Mr. Beattie's

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accountant in his office at Leete's Island. He continued in this important place with much satisfaction for many years. During the period Mr. Wildman was connected with the financial end of Mr. Beattie's organization some of the most important granite work in the East was completed. This included thirteen bridges on the old Harlem Railroad, a beacon at Wickford, R. I., a break-water at Block Island, one at Westport, Conn.; and he furnished all of the granite work in the "cut" and the tunnel in New York City from Harlem River to the old Grand Central Depot.

This Beattie contract is said to have involved the great sum of \$400,000. During those years the firm constructed twelve beacons, the foundation for the New Haven Lighthouse, the abutments for the Brooklyn Bridge; and every stone, it is said, in the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty on Bedloe's Island in New York was furnished by the Leete's Island concern. Good authorities assert the profit to Beattie accruing from this contract amounted to over \$75,000—an enormous figure for those more or less unsophisticated days.

After leaving the service of Mr. Beattie, he accepted a position in the executive auditing department of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company at New Haven. In this place he remained for some years, or until he became the Postmaster of Guilford. His administration of the Guilford Post Office, necessarily brief because of his death, was entirely satisfactory and in keeping with the high standard established in the sixties by Charles Griswold and carried on by his successors.

On a brilliantly moonlit April night during the Spring

JOEL TUTTLE WILDMAN

of Postmaster Wildman's first year in the office, an exciting event took place which furnished conversation for the townspeople for some days at least. Night Watchman Charles Jillson was busy on his rounds on the night in question when he started to "cover" his beat down Whitfield Street. While walking between the late George Meigs' house and what was formerly the Post Office, he looked east, as was his custom, across the back yards of the intervening houses. With the aid of the bright moon he observed two men at work in the rear of the Post Office building. He quickly returned to Boston Street, and rushed through a narrow passage between the William Elliott house and the so-called Landon house next to the Post Office. Upon emerging he found two men at work trying to pry the rear door of the building from its hinges. Quickly he fired at them and apparently hit one of the robbers.

The men rushed to the front of the building. Mr. Jillson followed suit. The two men first seen in the rear were then joined by three more who had been on watch in front. They took one of their number, apparently injured, in their arms and ran east very rapidly on Boston Street. Many shots were fired, but it was never learned how seriously one of the potential robbers was injured. Mr. Jillson was highly praised for his timely prowess which followed along the same lines as an adventure of his father's, also a previous night watchman, who frustrated a similar attempted robbery in the rear of the Post Office in Park Street when George N. Bradley was Postmaster in the early nineties.

Mr. Wildman's health, never robust, began to fail in November of his first year in office. He was ailing all

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of that winter and on several occasions his condition was considered more or less critical. He died on the morning of March 12, 1903, in the sixty-first year of his age.

He had many friends, was a man of unusual ability, and was considered as such among his fellow-men of the community where he spent most of his life.

Highly cultured, a man of extremely rare intelligence, educated as well as anyone could be at that period, an outstanding student at Yale, he was looked upon by citizens as not only a scholar and a gentleman, but illustrating in many ways the standard of cultural achievement attained by a gentleman under George the Fourth in England or of Thomas Jefferson in the United States.

He married on August 12, 1886, Miss Cathalena Fiske, daughter of Dr. H. Ingersoll Fiske, long a prominent physician of Guilford. She was a woman of uncommon character and great charm, deeply beloved by her many friends. She died on November 23, 1933.

Postmaster Wildman left a son, Frederick James Wildman, who has long been a government employee at Washington, and four daughters, three of whom are now living. They are Miss Katherine Wildman, Miss Alberta Wildman, and Mrs. Burton Landon, all of Guilford.

CHAPTER XXIII

Levi Odell Chittenden

May 6, 1903, to January 5, 1916

Presidents: Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, Woodrow Wilson.

Postmaster Generals: Henry C. Payne, Wisconsin; Robert J. Wynne, Pennsylvania; George B. Cortelyou, New York; George von L. Meyer, Massachusetts; Frank H. Hitchcock, Massachusetts; Albert S. Burleson, Texas.

Levi Odell Chittenden lived in Guilford for many years after he returned from the Civil War and was one of the town's staunchest and most honored citizens. He was a quiet man, unobtrusive, faithful and loyal to his friends; and they were legion. He did not seek public office, nor did he mingle much in the public affairs of the town, unless it was a paramount issue that called men of his type to the front. In his later years he served for a long period as one of the town's Postmasters, and he died honored, respected, and mourned as one of the substantial citizens of the era.

He was a member of one of the town's oldest families—a family that has furnished Guilford as well as other places with some of its outstanding citizens. Mr. Chittenden belonged to the North Guilford branch of the Chittenden family. They had lived there for generations, and were leading citizens of the northern parish of the town. The son of Chauncey Chittenden, he was born September 28, 1844; and he died on April 4, 1928, having reached the age of eighty-four. He was the only son of a widowed mother.

Mr. Chittenden's early years were spent with relatives

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in North Haven, and in that town he attended the public schools and grew up with the boys of the section. When the Civil War burst upon the peaceful countryside he immediately became anxious to join the Northern forces, and at the age of seventeen years he enlisted as a private in Company I of the famous old Fourteenth Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers. He went at once to the front and participated in all the engagements in which that organization took part. His record was of the highest type, and although he did not become an officer he did his part in a painstaking manner which earned him the respect of his comrades. At the close of the war, at the age of twenty-one years, the young man returned to Guilford and went to his old home in North Guilford where he bridged the years from the close of the war until he learned the carpenter's trade in Guilford. He followed this work for a long period of time and with success. For several years he was deeply interested in the work of the Guilford Light Battery and soon became its first lieutenant. He was present that tragic morning on July 4, 1876, when the late Clarence Hawley, later a well-known Guilford merchant, lost a portion of an arm while the sunrise salute was being fired near the Soldiers' Monument. Mr. Chittenden was the first lieutenant of the Battery from 1872 to 1876, and previous to that he had been the clerk of the borough of Guilford from 1870 to 1872.

Following his trade from year to year Mr. Chittenden decided in the late eighties to go to Kearney, Nebraska, where he remained working at his trade for two years. Early in 1890 he returned to his native town, and he made it his home for the remainder of his life.

LEVI ODELL CHITTENDEN

He finally abandoned his work as a carpenter, and entered the service of I. S. Spencer's Sons where, later, and for a long term of years, he was the efficient engineer of the plant. He occupied this position with eminent success. Always an enthusiastic republican it was natural that early in the last century the suggestion was made to him that he become a candidate for Postmaster of the town. He did not enter the lists for the position at the time with any seriousness until the untimely death of Postmaster Wildman. The republicans of the town as a rule looked upon him as an ideal candidate for the place, so they threw their influence behind his application. He easily won the place and served first as the acting Postmaster, dating from May 6, to November 1, 1903; and then he served regular terms for a total space of thirteen years—a long record. Postmaster Chittenden made an official who won the general approval of the community. For a long period he was assisted in the Post Office by his wife, who now survives him; and the service given the public was always of the highest order. Postmaster Chittenden was actually the first Postmaster to occupy the present site. There had for some time been a desire on the part of the general public to move the location of the office in Boston Street to the new building erected a few years previous by J. Harrison Monroe. The removal of the office took place during the very late administration of Postmaster Joel Tuttle Wildman, but the first Postmaster to actually administer the work of the office in that building was Postmaster Chittenden. This proved to be a very satisfactory site, and has continued so with unabated success since 1903, a period of over thirty-one years. There are many at

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the present time, however, who favor a regular Post Office building for this town. It seems to these persons that Guilford ought to be entitled to one as well as the neighboring town of Branford where a fine government building has been opened in a central location within the recent past. The present office is well situated but that it could be materially and substantially improved upon for the modern handling of the mails of a Second Class Post Office such as Guilford, is an indisputable fact.

It is, therefore, within the realms of possibility that within a few years Guilford will probably have a modern Post Office building. There is, however, at the present time (September, 1934) a newly executed ten years' lease for the present quarters.

An important event in Postmaster Chittenden's administration was the introduction into Guilford of the then recently organized "parcel post" addition to the general Post Office work. This measure had been debated in Congress for a long time, and the so-called Parcel Post Delivery Act was finally passed in January, 1912. It did not, however, go into effect until January 1, 1913, so the last three years of Mr. Chittenden's administration saw the actual introduction of this modern postal service into this community. It is interesting to observe in this connection that during the first six months of its operation in the United States as a whole, over 300,000,000 parcels were handled. It was an immediate success in Guilford as well as elsewhere, and has always remained an extremely popular addition to the service.

Another improvement was inaugurated during his term. This was the so-called "C.O.D." innovation, or,

LEVI ODELL CHITTENDEN

more properly called, the Collect on Delivery Service. The Act covering this service was passed January 1, 1913, but it did not become effective until July 1 of that year. Therefore, it was under the administration of Postmaster Chittenden that this new law became a part of the regular Post Office work. Under this Act goods of certain kinds could be sent, and upon delivery the price of the goods, as well as a fee for the transmission of the same, was collected from the consignee. This has now been in operation for twenty-one years and has proved most successful in all ways.

It is therefore seen that during the administration of Postmaster Chittenden two of the most important modern postal improvements of recent times were brought about, and it was through his agency that they were first put into operation in this town at least. They have both been proved entirely successful and valuable additions to the postal service.

His last years were marked by more or less ill health, and he suffered from a heart ailment that finally ended his life.

Mr. Chittenden married twice, his last wife being Miss Elizabeth Burr who has been a resident of Guilford for many years and survives him in the Chittenden home.

The career of Mr. Chittenden was one that will be remembered as having illustrated the quiet, capable, loyal, New England spirit that has made this as well as other New England towns a byword for good citizenship and probity.

CHAPTER XXIV

Edward B. Sullivan

January 5, 1916, to July 1, 1924

President: Woodrow Wilson.

Postmaster Generals: Will H. Hays, Indiana; Albert S. Burleson, Texas; Hubert Work, California; Harry S. New, Indiana.

Edward B. Sullivan, who has for a long time been one of the well-known residents of the town, was one of the three men who were graduated from the malleable iron foundry of I. S. Spencer's Sons to become Postmaster of the town. The other two were Levi Odell Chittenden, who preceded him, and George A. Sullivan, who followed within a few years.

Mr. Sullivan was also the first of the well-known Irish families who settled in Guilford to be thus signally honored. They had commenced to settle in Guilford immediately after 1855, and the descendants of these men and women are now among our best citizens. The descendants of those frugal, hard-working and hardy men and women have always been a source of pride for the citizens of Guilford, as well as many other places in the country.

Edward B. Sullivan was born in this town in 1884, the son of Daniel and Johanna Moran Sullivan. Both his parents were members of well-known Irish families and of sterling character. Mr. Sullivan's early years were passed in attending the village schools where he secured the usual amount of what was then considered

EDWARD B. SULLIVAN

the appropriate educational stimulant to carry the average Guilford boy, under normal conditions, through life. Then he followed the usual procedure of the Guilford youth for many generations—and found a job.

His youthful years were spent working in the great factory of Yale & Towne Company at Stamford, whose products are found in every civilized country of the world. In that city he lived and worked for some years and then he returned to Guilford, as Guilford boys and men as well have been doing with more or less regularity for the past two hundred years. No matter how much they may have prospered in the outside world, or how much they may have traveled in foreign lands, there are few who are born here but who do not retain the devotion for the town that gave them birth and to which many return. These quondam residents or natives are never found lacking when the occasion arises to prove their inherent affection for the town of their birth.

Mr. Sullivan entered the service of I. S. Spencer's Sons upon his return and remained with that well-known company until he became Postmaster of the town. His ability and his popularity were recognized in various ways. In the year 1913, at the age of twenty-nine years, he was the choice of the democratic party for representative in the General Assembly at Hartford and served with success for one term. It is impossible now to state whether or not he was the youngest man selected up to that period to represent the town in the General Assembly. But it is perfectly safe and sane to say that he was one of the youngest, and the fact is he could not have been much younger and hold the position. In the Session he took an active part and his record was of a satisfactory type.

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Three years later Mr. Sullivan was put forward as the local democracy's candidate for Postmaster. There were other candidates but he won the prize that year and was accordingly appointed by President Woodrow Wilson so that he commenced his term of office as the third democratic Postmaster since the Civil War, on January 5, 1916. When the reelection of Wilson in the Fall of 1916 took place, Mr. Sullivan later received the appointment for another term. His administration, therefore, occupied eight years of service, and he is remembered now as an excellent Postmaster.

The outstanding event of Mr. Sullivan's administration, and, indeed, the most important development of all time local Post Office history, took place during his incumbency. For a great many years, so long a time that nobody knew how long, the Guilford Post Office had been in what was called the third class classification. This meant in plain terms that any Post Office that had a business of less than \$8,000 a year could not be in the second class, but had to be content in the third division. Guilford had therefore been a third class office for a very long term of years. But with the growth of the normal population, and also the very important growth of the summer colony at Sachem's Head, Indian Cove, Mulberry, and other seashore places, naturally increased the amount of postal business. The coveted amount was "within sight" on several previous occasions, and Postmasters envisioned the "elevation" of the Post Office to the second class division with the resultant increase in salaries all along the line, from the bottom to the top. But their rosy hopes were frustrated on several occasions.

EDWARD B. SULLIVAN

The year 1922, a year memorable in local Post Office annals, started off well from a financial standpoint, and on July 1 the office showed that the goal of years had been reached. Guilford had definitely and conclusively entered the Second Class Department. Mr. Sullivan's colleagues therefore were the first to share in the prosperity attending that change in the order of classification. The Postmaster's salary jumped from a mere \$1,500 a year to the tidy sum of \$2,200, and clerks materially benefitted in a like proportion by the change. The income has never "dipped" below that standard since 1922, but instead has materially increased, though in a small degree.

When Mr. Sullivan retired from his eight years as the town's Postmaster he entered shortly after the service of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company, where he is employed at the time (1934) of the writing of this sketch.

He was elected a trustee of the Guilford Savings Bank in 1910 and has acted in that capacity since that date.

Mr. Sullivan is married and has two children.

CHAPTER XXV

Robert DeForest Bristol

July 1, 1924, to November 23, 1931

President: Calvin Coolidge.

Postmaster Generals: Harry S. New, Indiana; Walter S. Brown, Ohio.

The career of Robert DeForest Bristol shows that thirty-three years of his life were spent in the postal service of Guilford, a longer period than any other person who has ever held the office. As a result of this he has, since the late Fall of 1931, been the recipient of a government pension which in his case, at least, is properly and righteously bestowed for long service faithfully performed.

Added to this record of efficient service is the fact that Mr. Bristol entered upon his duties as actual Postmaster with the most extensive knowledge, in the author's opinion, and practical experience of general Post Office work of any one who has ever held the job. Every branch of the service, inside and out of the office, he had been familiar with by actual service, so that probably no better equipped Postmaster ever served Guilford. His two terms were entirely in accord with his previous work, and during his whole record covering much more than a generation, his standing with the Post Office Department and the public with whom he dealt was of the highest and most satisfactory order. Under his direction some of the far-reaching improvements of the postal service were put into effect in this town. These will be outlined later in this sketch.

ROBERT DEFOREST BRISTOL

Robert DeForest Bristol was born in Nut Plains September 4, 1879. He was the son of Eugene DeForest Bristol, a farmer of the section, and in that neighborhood he spent the early years of his life. Entering the Guilford Institute he was graduated in the usual course in 1897 at the age of eighteen years. The next year was spent on his father's farm in Nut Plains and during that period he decided to enter the postal service.

As a result the young man became connected with the Post Office on July 1, 1898, at the age of nineteen years. He was probably younger than anybody who had yet been admitted to the department's work. His subsequent career was a series of successes brought about only through the most intense and devoted work for the service.

The first job to which he was assigned was one of pure experiment, but his work was of such a definite character that the "experiment" was continued and probably he was one of those who brought into permanent success the then new Rural Free Delivery System. On July 1 he was appointed the first carrier for that system in Guilford, and he was indeed one of the very first in the whole United States. The story of the Rural Free Delivery is as follows: For a long term of years such men as Congressman Nehemiah D. Sperry, congressman from the Second Connecticut District, had been struggling to get the so-called rural delivery through Congress. Congressman Sperry was a most devoted and assiduous champion of this idea, and he worked in season and out to obtain the introduction of the service. His opponents challenged his judgment in the matter and alleged that the man who was not able

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to go to the village Post Office for his mail, as his ancestors had been doing for one or more centuries, had better remain without any mail at all. However, Mr. Sperry and his friends finally got the Rural Delivery Act through Congress and experimental stations were selected. The very first were in Maryland, but Congressman Sperry secured for Connecticut and this territory of Guilford the distinction of being one of the first to give the new and almost revolutionary system a trial. Therefore, on the first of July, 1898, Mr. Bristol with a horse and a wagon started on his first rural route. That route, devised by Postmaster Mary Griswold and a departmental official from Washington named Smith, was as follows: Starting from the Post Office on Boston Street the route led east to the East River Bridge, then north along the river on Clapboard Hill to the Eli Dudley place; then east over Hallett's Bridge, to the residence of Henry Parmelee; then retrace over Clapboard Hill to East Creek, to the residence of George L. Griswold; then north on East Creek road to the Andrew Foote place, then north to Samuel Blatchley's place; and from there over the hill and south to the Alvin Eldredge place. From there he retraced north through Nut Plains to Nelson Norton's home, and again retraced to the Nut Plains School. From there he drove to the Willard Watrous' farm, then to Joel Blatchley's home, retraced to the Durham-Guilford road, then south to the Wilcox and Woodruff farms, from there to the old Brush Mill Road; then north to the Harry Brewer place; then retrace south to the Post Office. This occupied the greater portion of the day and over this long, circuitous route Mr. Bristol traveled through all kinds of weather,

ROBERT DEFOREST BRISTOL

good and bad. His service in this department of the work covered the remarkable period of twenty-four years. There is probably no record in the entire Union of the States that will any more than match it. As time went forward the route was lengthened, and added to it was a section of Moose Hill which was entered by a trip through the old Peddler's Road starting at the west side. Still later on, this Moose Hill route was further extended by a trip to Leete's Island, via the old road leading from near the Brewer place south. During his régime an extension was made during the summer period to Mulberry Point and Indian Cove, formerly known for half a century as the Pipe Bay. During all this period Mr. Bristol maintained a high level of efficiency and it can truly be said that no man ever put into a job more loyalty, sincerity or devotion. During the early years of this work he received only \$300 a year salary, which included horse hire, etc., but towards the end his salary was raised to \$1,975 a year, which compensated in a small way for the pitifully small remuneration of the early days.

On September 1, 1922, he was transferred from rural carrier to the position of auxiliary clerk in the Guilford office. This was a newly created position evolved as a result of the raising of the grade of the office from third to second class. In October of that year he was advanced to regular clerk. This position he held until he was appointed Assistant Postmaster April 13, 1923, a position he held from April 1, 1923, to July 1, 1924. On the latter date he was appointed Acting Postmaster, holding the position until December 10, when he received the appointment as Postmaster from President Calvin Coolidge.

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If ever a man had earned this honor he certainly was the one, and the town held this opinion generally as well as his friends.

The long years of arduous service in the office undermined Mr. Bristol's health and finally he was obliged to relinquish his work. Therefore, on November 23, 1931, he retired on account of disability and left the postal service.

During his incumbency Mr. Bristol was instrumental in having the ordinary so-called village delivery changed to the city delivery status, and William Norton and John Bergen were the first carriers under that revised system.

Mr. Bristol, in retirement, slowly regained his lost health and in recent years has been comfortable and able to participate in the affairs of life in almost the usual manner. He has been an enthusiastic party worker throughout his adult life and is to-day, when this sketch was written, one of the "faithful" of the republican party who count it an honor to devote their time to the party they have upheld since boyhood.

The writer of these sketches has been told by several citizens who have followed the career of Mr. Bristol during the thirty-three years he was a member of the postal service, that no harder working man ever lived in Guilford during that period. Besides holding the offices which called for a man-sized work each day he usually had one or more "sidelines" that he developed to success in the same manner that he did his Post Office job. There were few days in any year of that long period when he had what is now termed "time off." Codes did not affect him or his work. He needed none.

ROBERT DEFOREST BRISTOL

It is an indubitable fact, according to the best reports of this man's life work, that no one ever deserved success any more than he did. The major portion of his life was given to the business of making the mail service of Guilford as good as it could be under existing rules and regulations. He has the grateful regard of those citizens who recognize the fine record he made.

Mr. Bristol lives on Graves Avenue and has the respect of the entire community whom he served so faithfully, loyally and expertly for thirty-three years.

CHAPTER XXVI

George Augustus Sullivan

November 23, 1931 to Date

President: Herbert Hoover.

Postmaster General: Walter S. Brown, Ohio.

George Augustus Sullivan, the Postmaster of Guilford at the present time (1935), is the twenty-first person who has occupied this office in Guilford. He is also the third Postmaster who was graduated from the foundry of I. S. Spencer's Sons to become the head of the postal system of Guilford. Mr. Sullivan assumed the office as the successor to Robert DeForest Bristol on his enforced retirement on account of illness in 1931, and he later received appointment for the regular term. His term expires in April, 1936.

Mr. Sullivan was born in Guilford on February 2, 1876, the son of Mr. and Mrs. John G. Sullivan. His father died some years ago and was also one of those early Irish residents who came to Guilford and left their imprint on the town of their adoption.

The future Postmaster attended the Guilford Institute where he studied for some years but left, as many boys did in those days, during the middle of his course. This was for many years the usual custom of boys and girls who thought it far more advisable to start the work of life than to remain in school. It was rather an unusual thing for a boy to complete the four years' course. After he had left the school he entered the

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SULLIVAN

employ of the Spencer Foundry and started work in the brass department as an assistant to the late Charles Bartlem, who was in charge of that section of the factory for a long time. After working there for a year he removed to New Haven and was employed by the Mallory Lock Company of that city. During the time he was in New Haven the so-called "Hard Times" of Grover Cleveland's second administration caused the closing of many manufacturing plants, and accordingly Mr. Sullivan changed his activities to Branford, where he was in the service of the Yale Lock Company of that town for a period of four years.

He was made a voter in Branford, was always identified with the republican party, and cast his first vote in the election of 1897. Later he occupied a position for some years with the Branford Power and Light Company, now a unit of the Connecticut Light and Power Company. Some time later he was transferred to the Waterbury headquarters of that company which was called the New England Engineering Company, and in that city he lived six months. Later on he worked in New Britain for the same company, but in 1901 he returned to his native town in which he has remained and been a valued citizen.

At this time he again entered the service of I. S. Spencer's Sons in the moulding department. In this work he remained constantly until he finally left in 1931 to take up the postal work to which he had been appointed by President Hoover to fill a vacancy. This vacancy as was previously explained occurred on account of the ill health of Postmaster Bristol, and his inability from a physical standpoint to continue his work. He

A YANKEE POST OFFICE

was the Acting Postmaster from November 23, 1931, to April, 1932, when he was again appointed, but this time as the town's regular Postmaster, his four years' term being served at the present time.

During Mr. Sullivan's residence in Guilford the last time, beginning in 1901, he was a consistent and loyal member of the republican party. He was honored in 1917 at the age of forty-one years by being elected a member of the General Assembly from Guilford. While in that body he was a member of the Military Affairs Committee.

For a long period during his younger years, Mr. Sullivan was one of the best baseball players in Guilford, and was a member of the Guilford Club that made baseball history. His activities in that game are still well remembered and will not be forgotten by the present generation at least.

Postmaster Sullivan was married in 1912 to Miss Gertrude Canavan of Amherst, Mass. They have one son and a daughter.

The staff of the Guilford Post Office on January 1, 1935, was as follows: Postmaster, George A. Sullivan; Assistant Postmaster, Willis M. Nettleton; Clerk, Miss Dorothy S. Phinny; Auxiliary Clerk, Miss Daisy Howell; Substitute Clerk and Carrier, William F. Linsky; City Carrier, William L. Norton, Route No. 1; City Carrier, John M. Bergen, Route No. 2; Rural Carriers: Horace Putney, Route No. 1; Clarence U. Loomis, Route No. 2; Mail Messenger, Howard L. Rood.

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